

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY



LANZING
KELLY
WALKER
HOLLINGSWORTH

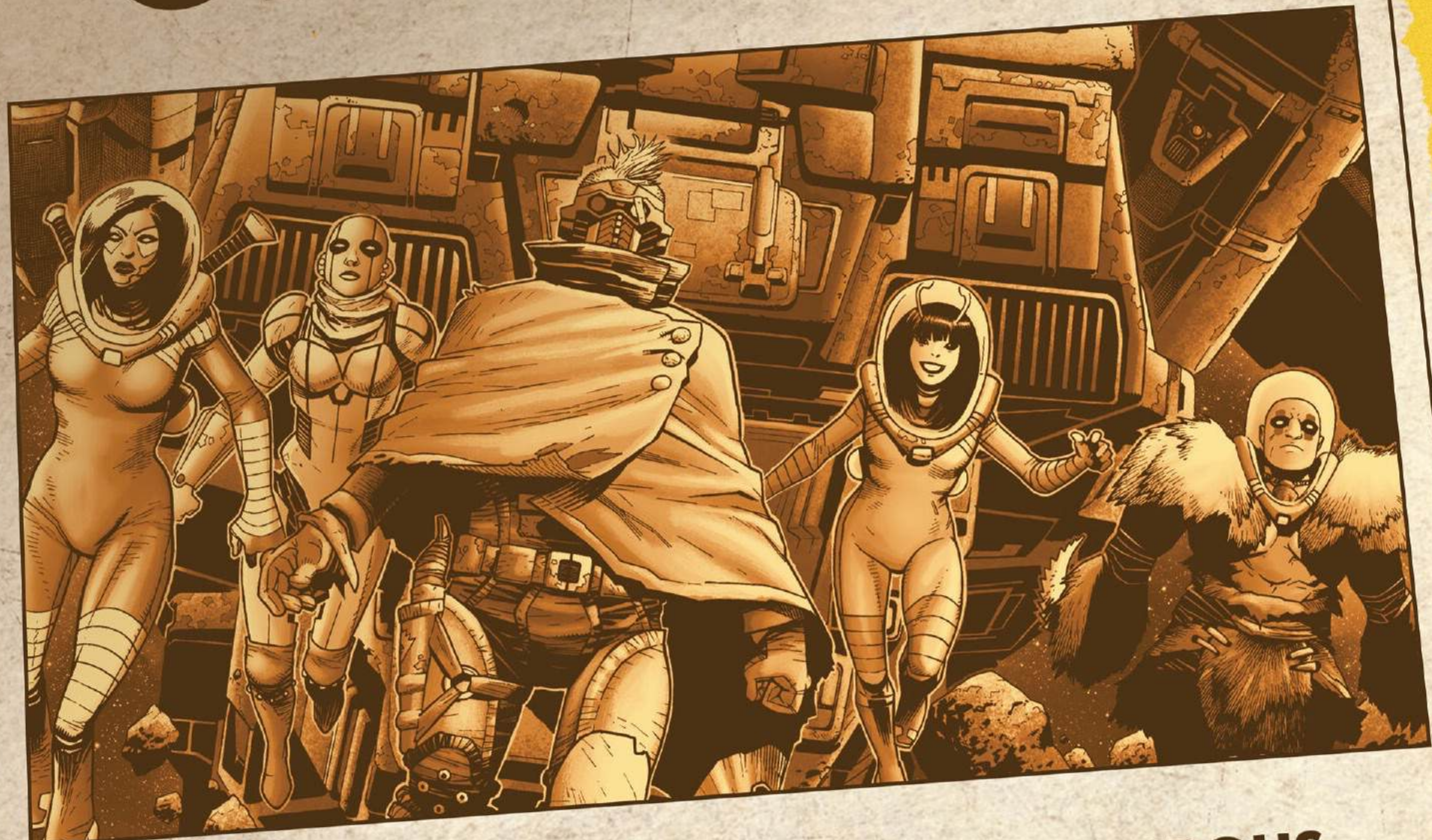
MARVEL

GROOTRISE

WANTED

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

GROOTRISE



THOUGHT TO BE ARMED AND DANGEROUS.

REWARD FOR CAPTURE:

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY

IN “GROOTRISE”

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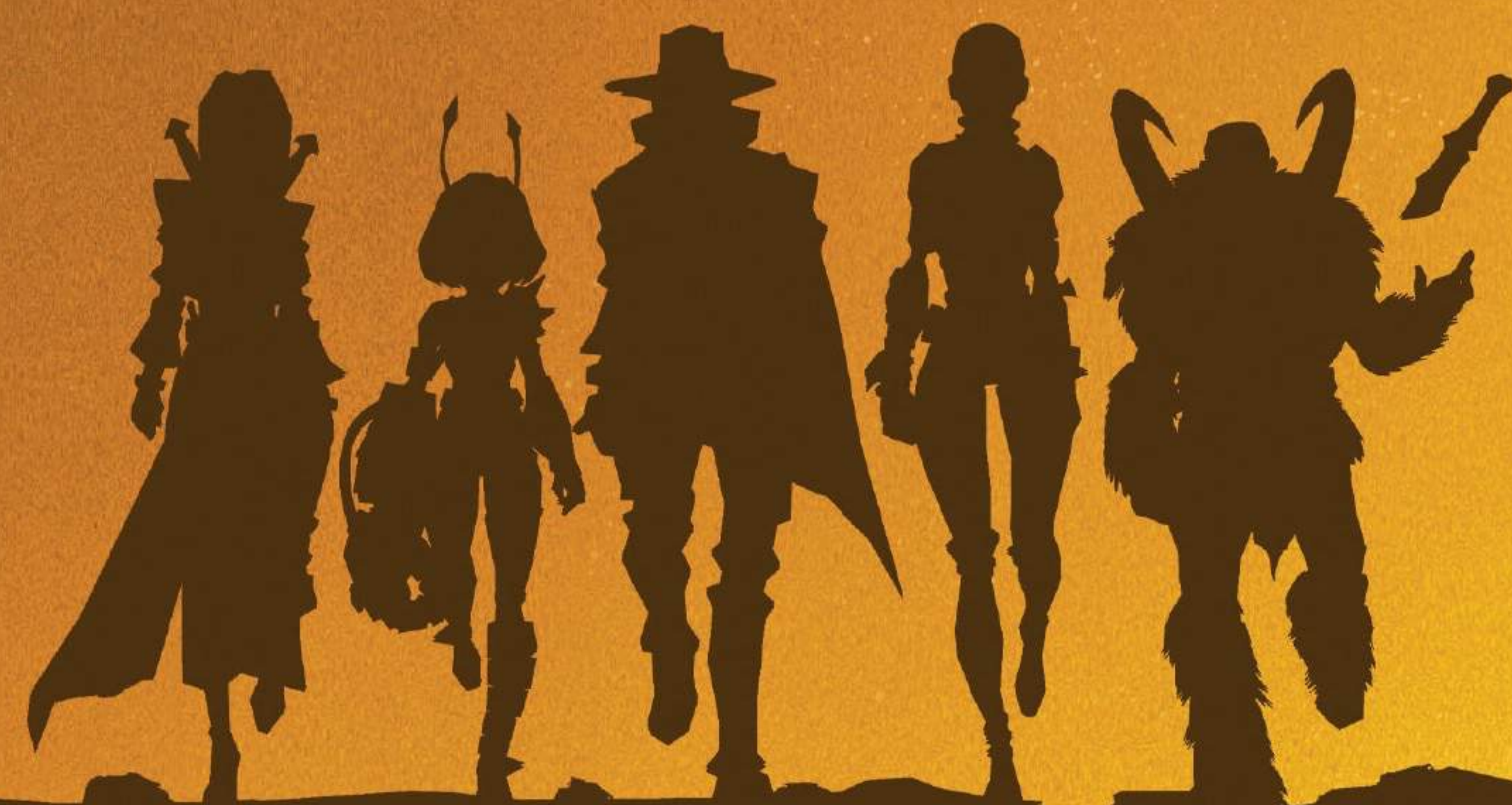
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6

"THE HAND-DUG GRAVE"

SO.
THIS IS
WHAT IT'S
LIKE TO BE
DEAD.

THOUGHT IT
MIGHT BE MORE
PEACEFUL.

FLERKENKACK.

NO WAY I
END UP IN THE
SAME AFTERLIFE
AS THE REST
OF YOU.

THERE IS NO
REST OF YOU.
THERE IS ONLY
ME WHO IS
YOU.

OKAY,
SO WE'RE ALL
DEAD.

DECOMPOSING.
AND DREAMING.

WE'RE IN
THE ROOTS.
BUT WE'RE STILL
CONSCIOUS. SO
MAYBE WE CAN
STILL...

...IF THERE'S
ANY WAY OUT
OF THIS, IT'S
THROUGH
GROOT.

⇒SIGH⇐
ALL
RIGHT.

WHAT
YOU GOT,
TREE?

ALERT

ALERT?
NEBULA,
WHY IS MY
STATION
THROWING UP
AN ALERT?

THIS...

...THIS IS THE
PROSCENIUM.
A YEAR AGO. THIS
IS *THAT* DAY.

'CUZ I
GOTTA BE
HONEST...

...I HAD TO
CONVINCE A *LOT*
OF PEOPLE THAT YOU
WEREN'T SECRETLY
TRYING TO DESTROY OUR
OPERATION FROM THE
INSIDE JUST TO GET
YOU THROUGH THE
DOOR.

I WAS SO
NERVOUS.

AND I
WAS JUST
TRYING TO
HELP.

OKAY,
TELL ME
MORE.

YOU WERE
THE SUPER HEROES
OF SPACE. SANCTIONED BY
THE GALACTIC FEDERATION.
MATCHING UNIFORMS.
SAVING ENTIRE STAR
SYSTEMS.

YOU WERE
INSPIRING. AND I
WAS WASTING THE
PROBABILITY ENGINE
IN MY HEAD.

BUT WITH
THE THREAT DATA
OF THE GUARDIANS
OF THE GALAXY...

...WE'D BE
LIKE A GALACTIC
EARLY-WARNING SYSTEM.
FIND THE DANGER, SQUASH
THE DANGER, BEFORE THE
DANGER EVER GETS
DANGEROUS. I
LOVE IT.

NO. I
WASN'T.

BUT I WAS
READY TO TRY
SOMETHING
NEW.

WELL, IN
THAT CASE,
NEBULA...

YOU SURE
IT'S SAFE? FOR YOU?
YOU'LL BE PROCESSING
AN ENTIRE *NETWORK*
OF DATA.

...WELCOME
TO THE GUARDIANS
OF THE GALAXY.

IT DIDN'T TAKE MORE THAN AN HOUR TO FIND. THE MOST LIKELY THREAT VECTOR TO *GALACTIC PEACE*.

THERE'S NOTHING THERE.

NOTHING THAT WE KNOW OF.

NO, I MEAN, THE GALACTIC COUNCIL HAS MARKED THAT ENTIRE SECTION AS "PRESERVED WORLDS."

IN CASE YOU DON'T SPEAK *KREE PAPERWORK*, THAT'S CODE FOR "COMPLETELY USELESS."

A PLACE NO ONE WOULD'VE EVER GONE. A SECRET THAT COULD'VE STAYED SECRET.

USELESS LIKE PETE'S SKULL?

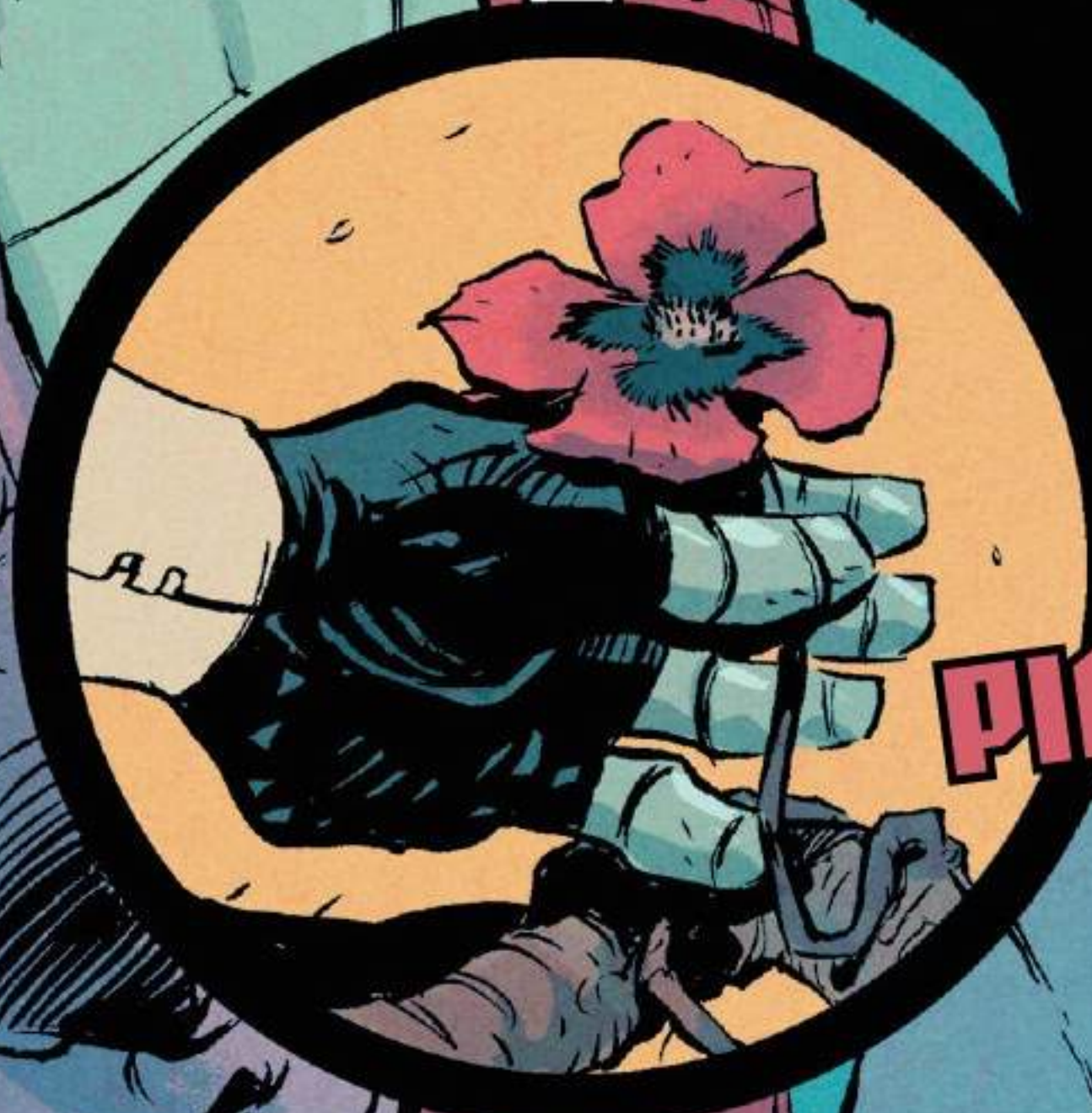
THIS IS AN EXCELLENT OBSERVATION, MOONDRAGON-- HIS BRAINS ARE INDEED *VERY SMALL*.

IF ONLY FOR ME. WANTING TO PRETEND I WAS SOME KIND OF HERO.

YOU SHOULD'VE TURNED ME AWAY SIGHT UNSEEN.

THEY MIGHT ALL STILL BE ALIVE.

IT WAS MY FAULT.



OH, YOU
\$&%@\$# HAVE
NO IDEA WHAT
YOU'RE TALKIN'
ABOUT.

I AM
GROOT.

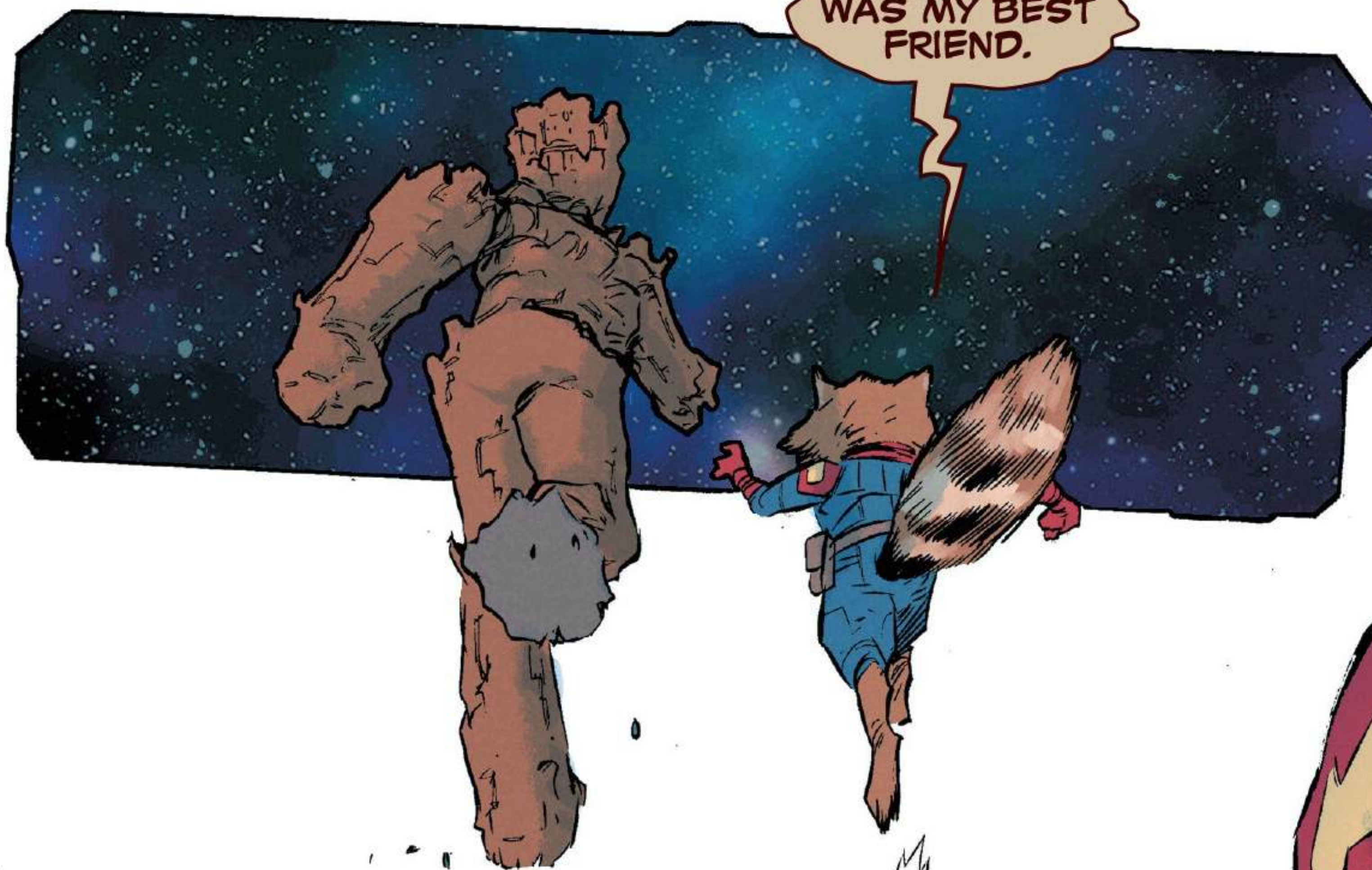
BUT,
I MEAN,
NEITHER
DID I.

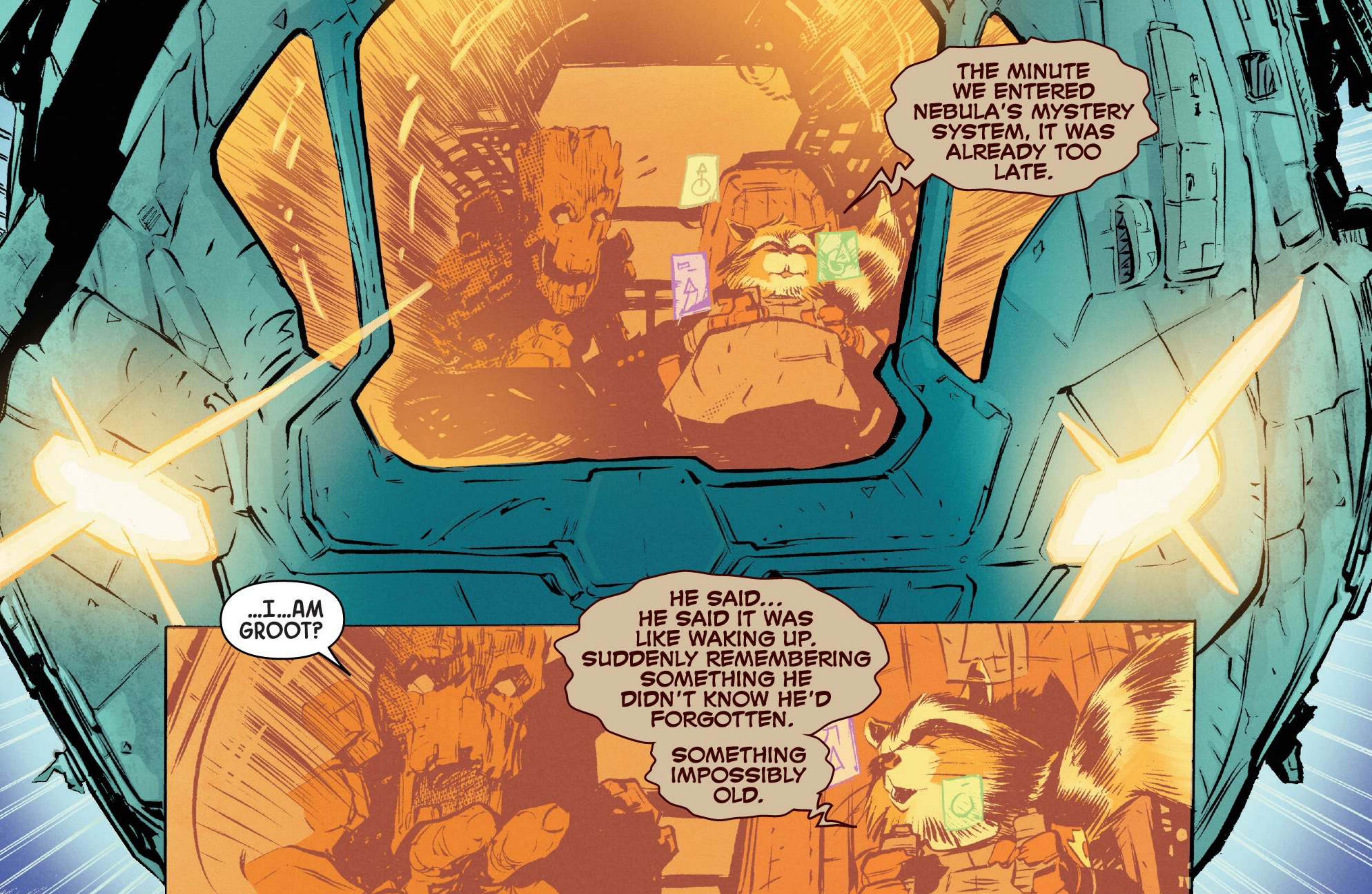
AS SOON
AS HE VOLUNTEERED
FOR THE MISSION TO THE
**MOST STATISTICALLY
DANGEROUS PLANET IN
THE GALAXY**, I WAS AT
HIS SIDE. DIDN'T EVEN
HESITATE.

WHAT
ELSE COULD
I DO?



HE
WAS MY BEST
FRIEND.





THE MINUTE
WE ENTERED
NEBULA'S MYSTERY
SYSTEM, IT WAS
ALREADY TOO
LATE.

...I...AM
GROOT?

HE SAID...
HE SAID IT WAS
LIKE WAKING UP.
SUDDENLY REMEMBERING
SOMETHING HE
DIDN'T KNOW HE'D
FORGOTTEN.
SOMETHING
IMPOSSIBLY
OLD.



HE CALLED
'EM THE BRANCH
WORLDS.
BUT THAT
WAS JUST A
FANCY TERM FOR
"HOME."



'CEPT
IT WAS DEAD.
PETRIFIED.

GROOT.

AND
GROOT JUST
KEPT REPEATING
THE SAME
THING.

I AM
GROOT! I AM
GROOT! I AM
GROOT!

OVER
AND OVER.



"SHE'S DYING."

I...

...AM...

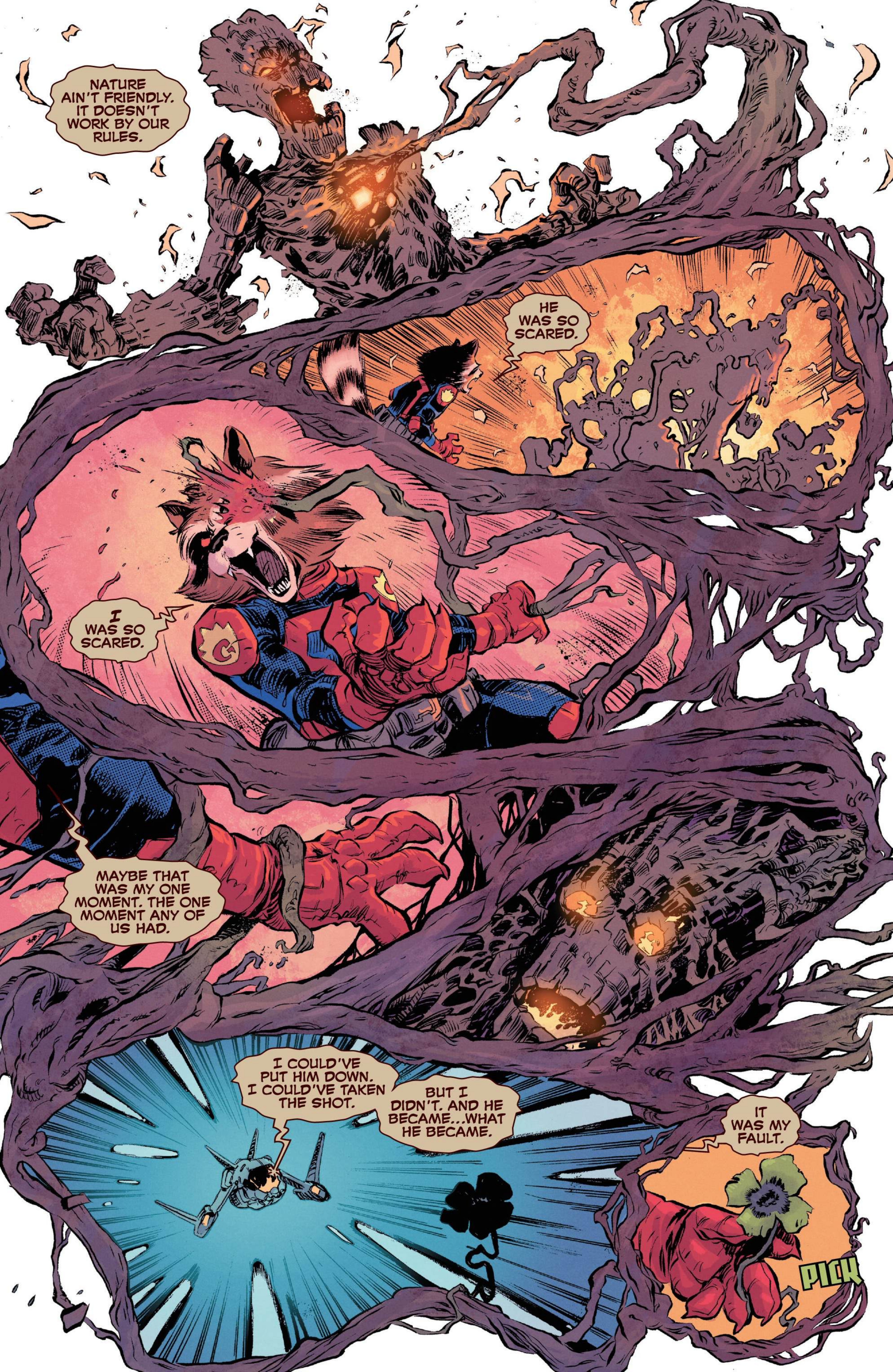
I THINK SHE WAS THE FIRST OF THEM.

...GRANOPY...

THE FIRST TREE. AND THE LAST.

UNTIL SHE REACHED OUT WITH A BRANCH AS OLD AS THE UNIVERSE...

...AND SHE GAVE HIM HER GIFT.



NATURE
AIN'T FRIENDLY.
IT DOESN'T
WORK BY OUR
RULES.

HE
WAS SO
SCARED.

I
WAS SO
SCARED.

MAYBE THAT
WAS MY ONE
MOMENT. THE ONE
MOMENT ANY OF
US HAD.

I COULD'VE
PUT HIM DOWN.
I COULD'VE TAKEN
THE SHOT.

BUT I
DIDN'T. AND HE
BECAME...WHAT
HE BECAME.

IT
WAS MY
FAULT.

PICK



I WAS
THE ONE WHO
GAVE THE ORDER.
THE MOMENT
ROCKET'S WARNING
CAME IN.

FULL-
SCALE TACTICAL
DEPLOYMENT.
EVERYONE AND
EVERYTHING
WE HAD.

OUR
FRIENDS. OUR
FAMILY.

THE
GREATEST
POWERS IN THE
GALAXY.

AND IN
LESS THAN A
MINUTE...

...I WAS
THE ONLY ONE
LEFT.

IT
WAS MY
FAULT.

PICK





IT WAS
MY CHOICE
TO STAY.

I HOPED TO
SPARE MY FRIEND
A HORRIBLE DEATH
BY MY HANDS.

SO I
WAS LEFT TO
LISTEN TO THE
SCREAMS.

THE
SCREAMS OF THE
WOMAN WHO WAS,
IN SO MANY WAYS,
MY DAUGHTER.

AS SHE
DIED HALF A
QUADRANT AWAY
AT THE HANDS OF A
THING I CALLED
FRIEND.

I HAD
TRIED, BACK
THEN, TO BE
THAT MAN.

THE
MUSICIAN.
THE ARTIST. THE
FATHER.

BUT HIS
SOUL WAS NOT
IN THIS SHELL! IT
WAS TRAPPED IN
A FARAWAY
STONE.





THE
ONLY THING
LEFT WAS THE
DESTROYER.

IT
WAS MY
FAULT.

PICK



OH,
MY TURN,
HUH?

GOTTA BE
HONEST. YOU
GUYS AREN'T
REALLY READY
FOR THIS
YET.

BUT LIFE
SINCE SEQUOIA
HASN'T FELT REAL.
AND I HAVEN'T
REALLY BEEN
MYSELF.
OR...I'VE
BEEN TOO MUCH
OF MYSELF. IT'S
CONFUSING. AND IT
TAKES UP A LOT
OF ME.

PERHAPS...
IF I HAD BEEN
TAKING CARE OF
ALL OF YOU,
INSTEAD OF
MYSELF...

I DIDN'T
EVEN KNOW
OUR WHOLE FAMILY
WAS GONE UNTIL IT
WAS DONE.

IT
WAS MY
FAULT.

PICK

IT CREATES
ASHES.



SPACE.



THE PERFECT
CONDITIONS...



...FOR SOMETHING
NEW TO GROW.







7

"INTO THE **FAR HORIZON**"

COMMON
WISDOM WAS
THIS--

--THE GUARDIANS
OF THE GALAXY
WERE DEAD
AND GONE.

BUT SEEING AS NOT
A SOUL HAD CROSSED
INTO THE 'FOLD IN
MONTHS, COMMON
WISDOM WAS LIKE
TO A *SHRUG*.

AND IF THERE'S
SOMETHING POWER
ABHORS...ITS OWN
IGNORANCE
RANKS HIGHLY.

SO OUT THEY SAILED,
DRIVEN BY RUMOR AND
FEAR, THOSE TWO
INVESTIGATORS OF
CIVILIZED BREEDING
AND ROYAL SECURITY...

...OUT TO A PLACE
THAT HAD NEVER BEEN
RULED BY ANY KING
BUT THE EMPTY AIR.

NEITHER HAD
ONCE STEPPED
FOOT ON
MANIFOLD SOIL.

THEIR MAPS OF THE
TERRITORY WEREN'T
NOTHING BUT A SMUDGE
ACROSS A STAR FIELD.

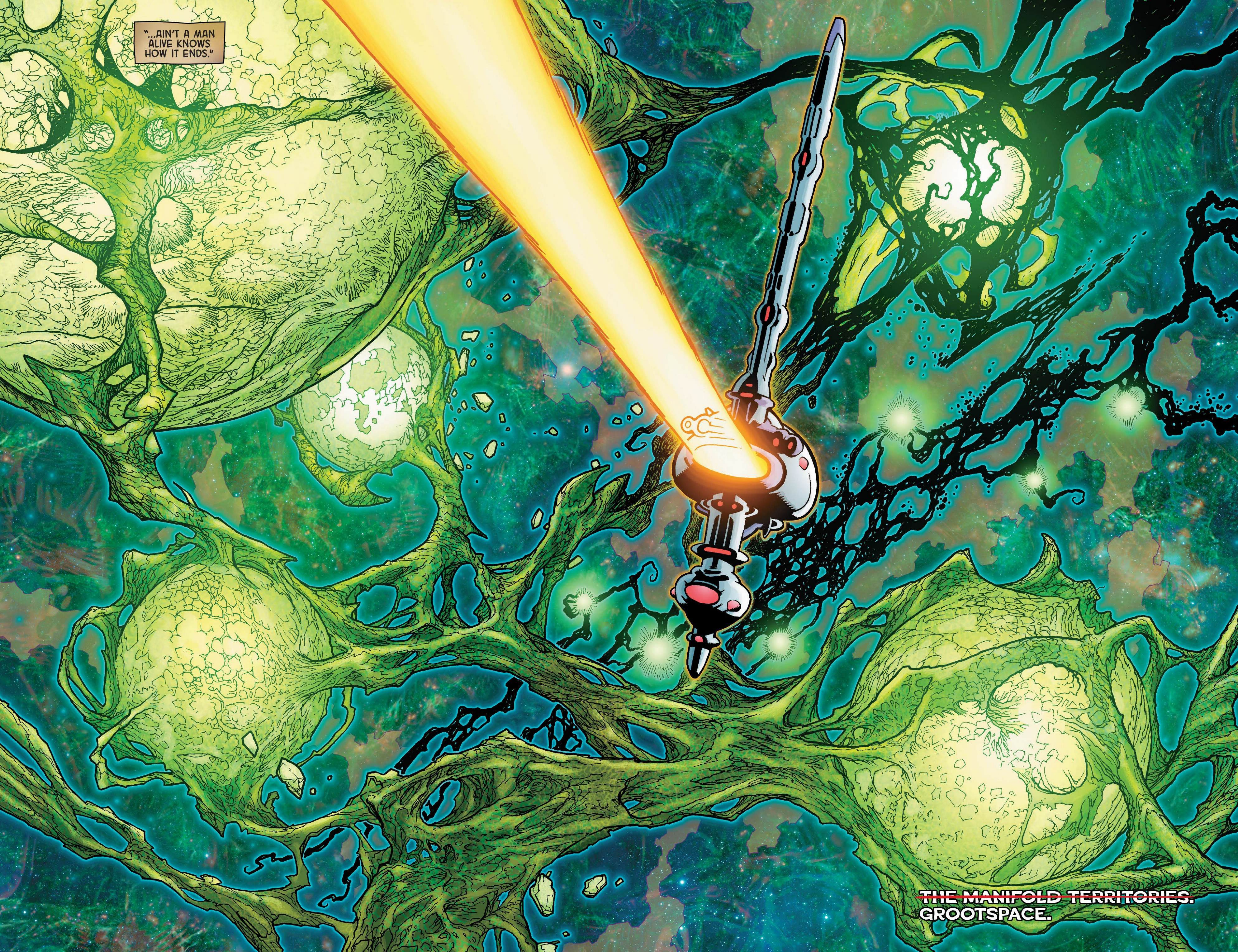
FORTUNATELY
FOR THEM
CITY SLICKERS...

...HULKLING
AND WICCAN
MET ME.

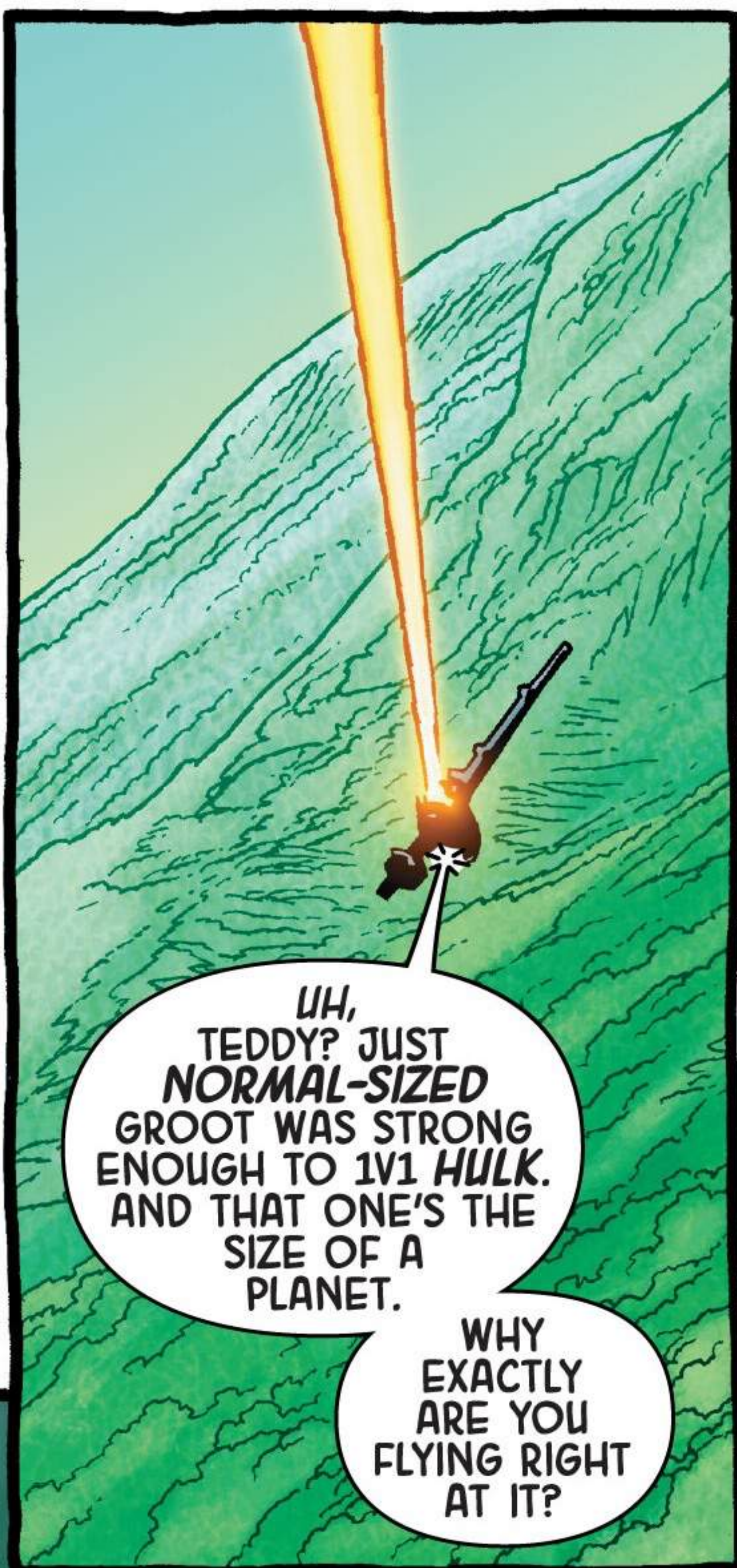




"...AIN'T A MAN
ALIVE KNOWS
HOW IT ENDS."

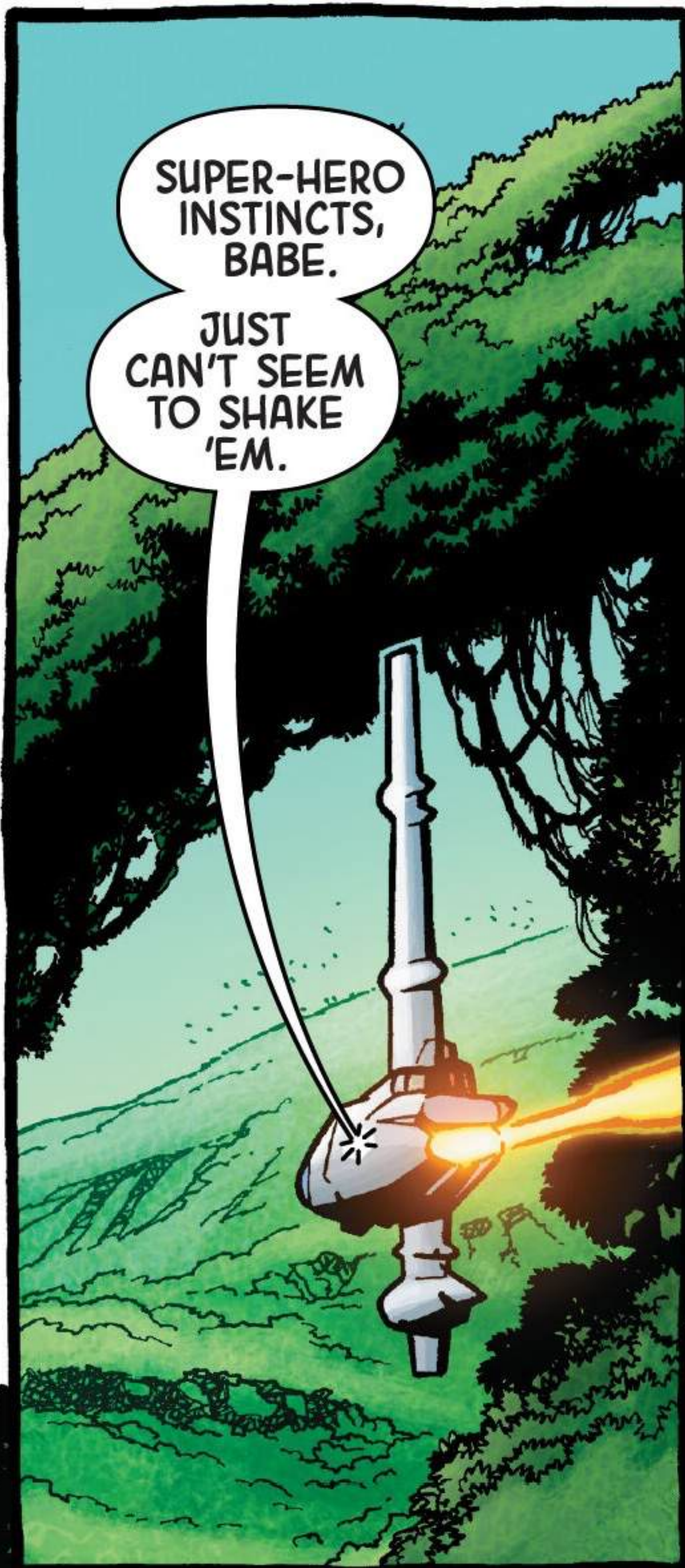


**THE MANIFOLD TERRITORIES.
GROOTSPACE.**



UH, TEDDY? JUST **NORMAL-SIZED** GROOT WAS STRONG ENOUGH TO 1V1 **HULK**. AND THAT ONE'S THE SIZE OF A PLANET.

WHY EXACTLY ARE YOU FLYING RIGHT AT IT?



SUPER-HERO INSTINCTS, BABE.

JUST CAN'T SEEM TO SHAKE 'EM.



OKAY, SO, IT'S A LITTLE BALMY...BUT **NOT** THE HELLSCAPE I WAS EXPECTING.

IT USED TO BE WORSE. DRY AS A KILN AND HOT AS THE FIRE.



BUT IT WAS HOME.

WE CALLED IT **SOLITUDE**. NAME OF THE TOWN...AND THE DREAM OF THOSE WHO LIVED HERE.

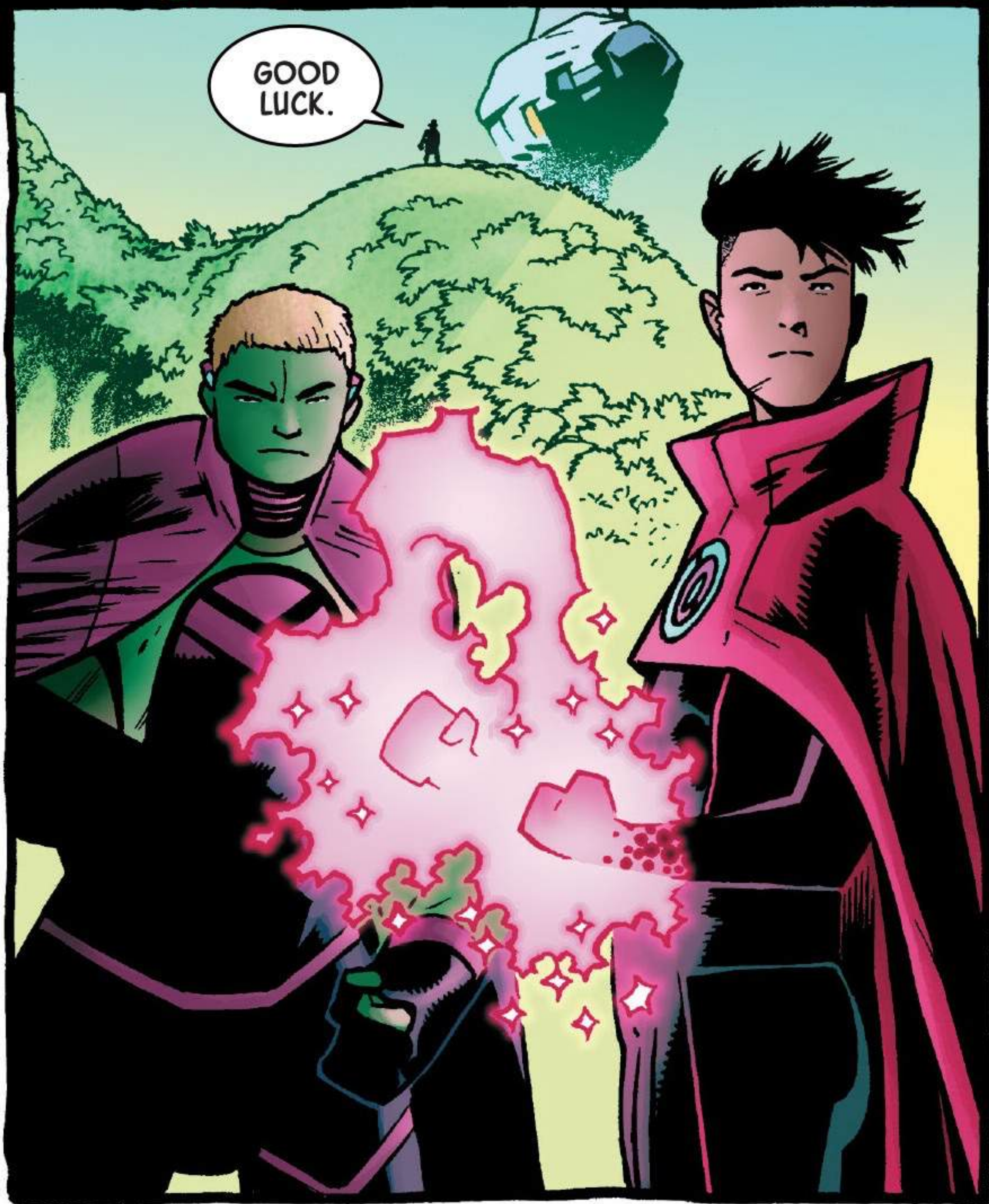
BUT THAT WAS BEFORE.



KID?
AREN'T YOU
COMING?

NAME'S *RILAK*.
AND I DID MY PART,
MISTER. WELCOME TO
THE 'FOLD. MAYBE YOU
DO SOME GOOD
ABOUT IT.

OR MAYBE
YOU END UP LIKE
EVERYONE I EVER
LOVED.



GOOD
LUCK.



I HOPE
THEY'RE
ALIVE.

I KNOW.
ME TOO,
BABY.



WAIT.

YOU
HEAR
THAT?



GR O O T

RAHHH!

SORRY, HORSE!

THE HELL IS THAT THING?

BILLY, THIS WORLD'S SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD. JUST BRANCHES AND BONES.

GROOT TAKES DOZENS OF WORLDS, CONNECTS THEM BY BRANCHES, STOPS EXPANDING...AND GROWS HORSES? THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE?

THE FOREST TELLS ME HER SECRET
THE FOREST TELLS ME HER SECRET
THE FOREST TELLS ME HER SECRET

I'VE GOT JUST THE SPELL.

!



HEY!
HANDS OFF MY
HUSBAND.

KRACKA



THOOM



DID THAT
TREE JUST...
PUNCH ME?



OOOF.



WE
AIN'T TREES,
TEDDY.

WE'RE THE
**GUARDIANS OF
GROOTSPACE.**

AND IT'S
TIME YOU
LISTEN THE
HELL UP.



...PETER?

WHAT...
WHAT **HAPPENED**
TO YOU GUYS?

SAME THING
THAT HAPPENED TO
THE PROSCENIUM. TO
OUR FRIENDS. AND TO
THE ENTIRE MANIFOLD
TERRITORIES.

WHOA, **BIG GUN**,
MAYBE THIS CAN BE
A **NO-ONE-HURTS-
ANYONE** SCENARIO?
CAN WE TALK LIKE
FRIENDS? IS
THAT ON THE
TABLE?

I DON'T
WANT TO
HURT YOU, BUT
I'M NOT GOING
TO LET YOU
HURT **US**.

DO NOT
TEST ME,
HULKLING.

JUST TOOK
US A LITTLE
LONGER.

I AM
RECENTLY SOBER
AND **EXTREMELY**
ILL-TEMPERED.

YEAH, WELL,
**MOST OF THE
GALAXY** THINKS
YOU'RE DEAD,
GAMORA.

DEATH MEANS
LITTLE IN THIS PLACE.
WE DIED, AND YET WE
ARE ALIVE. JUST LIKE
THIS WORLD.

AS LONG
AS THE ROOTS
REMAIN, THE
VINE CAN LIVE
AGAIN.

...WAIT.
DRAX, DOES
THAT MEAN...WHEN
GROOT DESTROYS
THINGS...THEY CAN
COME BACK?

YOU'RE
SAYING THEY'RE
ALIVE? PHYLA-VELL,
MOONDRAGON,
HERCULES...THEY'RE
STILL OUT
THERE?

NATURE'S
A LITTLE MORE
COMPLICATED
THAN THAT,
KID.

OKAY, THEN,
ROCKET. LET'S GET
IN THE WEEDS.

I WANT TO
UNDERSTAND LIKE
YOU I WANT TO
UNDERSTAND LIKE
YOU

I WANT TO
UNDERSTAND.

G R O O T

GUESS
THAT'S YOUR
INVITE, MAGIC
MAN.

ARE YOU
SURE ABOUT
THIS?

YOU KNOW
ME. I'M NEVER
SURE ABOUT
ANYTHING EXCEPT
YOU.

BUT IF
THERE'S A WAY
TO BRING OUR
FRIENDS
BACK...

...WE
GOTTA SEE
IT PLAIN.

Groot

WHERE
ONCE THERE
WERE BILLIONS,
THERE IS NOW
ONLY GROOT.

A FINAL
SEED ON THE
WIND, GIVEN
PURPOSE BY
THE LAST OF
HIS KIND.

TO RETURN TO
A LONG-LOST
HOMELAND. TO
TAKE WHAT WILL
NOT BE GIVEN.
AND THERE,
TO GROW.

A FOREST
IS NOT A TREE.
AND NATURE IS
NOT A VACUUM.
NOR IS IT KIND.

IT TAKES WHAT IS
REQUIRED. HEAT.
NUTRIENTS. LOVE.
AND IT HOLDS THEM
CLOSE, THOUGH
IT HURTS TO DO.

FOR
NEITHER
IS NATURE
CRUEL.

WHAT IT
TAKES, IT
GIVES.

WHAT IT
CONSUMES, IT
CREATES.

WHAT IT
TAKES IS
NOT DEAD,
BUT
WAITING.

UNTIL
ALL THAT
WAS LOST
IS FOUND.

A FAMILY
MADE WHOLE
IN TIME.

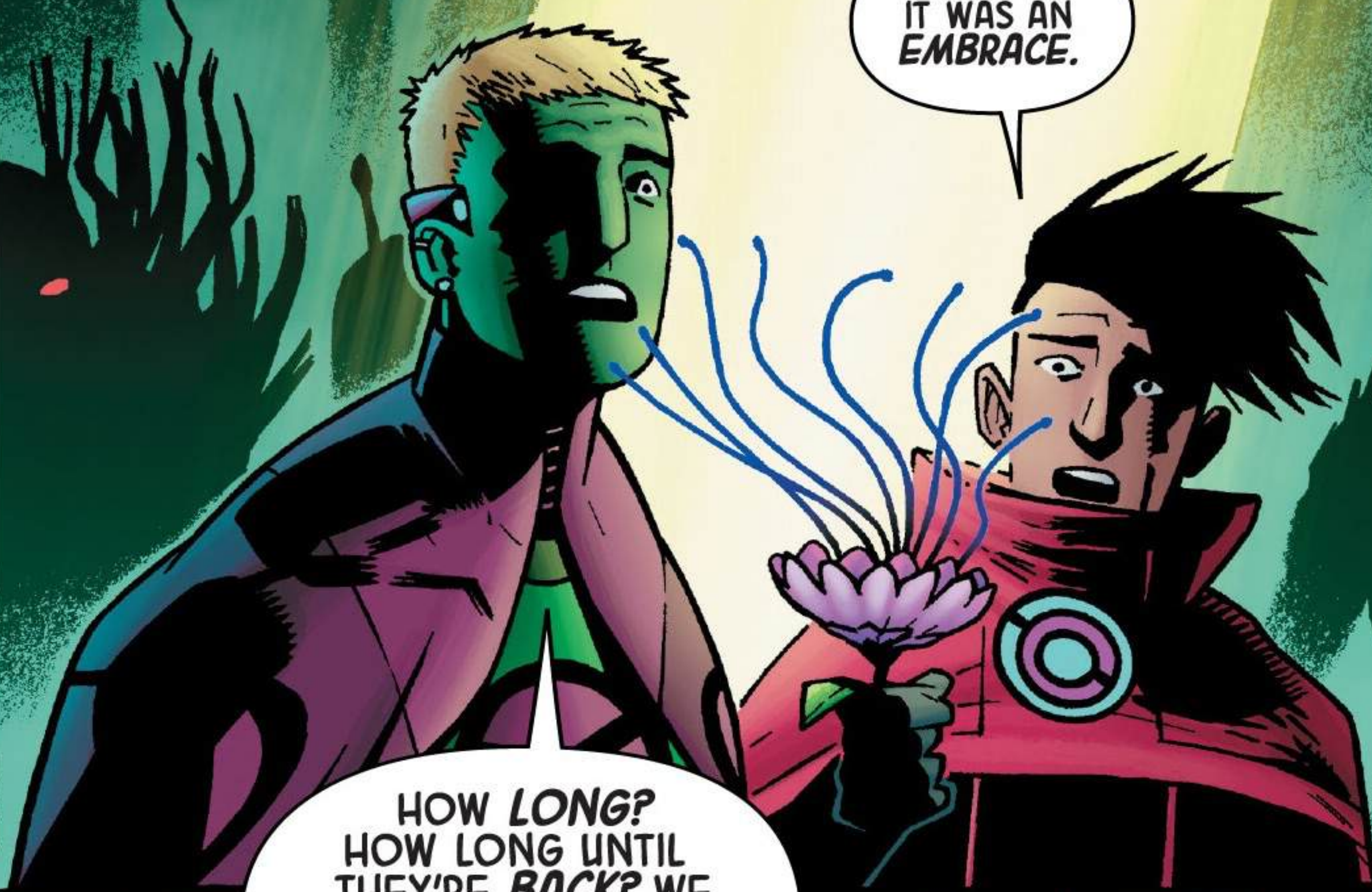


GROOT
DIDN'T GO
BAD.

HE JUST DID
THE THING THAT
CAME NATURALLY. AND
COULDN'T START TO
EXPLAIN WHY.

...THE ATTACK
ON THE PROSCENIUM.
THE WORLDS CONSUMED...
WE THOUGHT IT WAS
A SLAUGHTER.

BUT
IT WAS AN
EMBRACE.



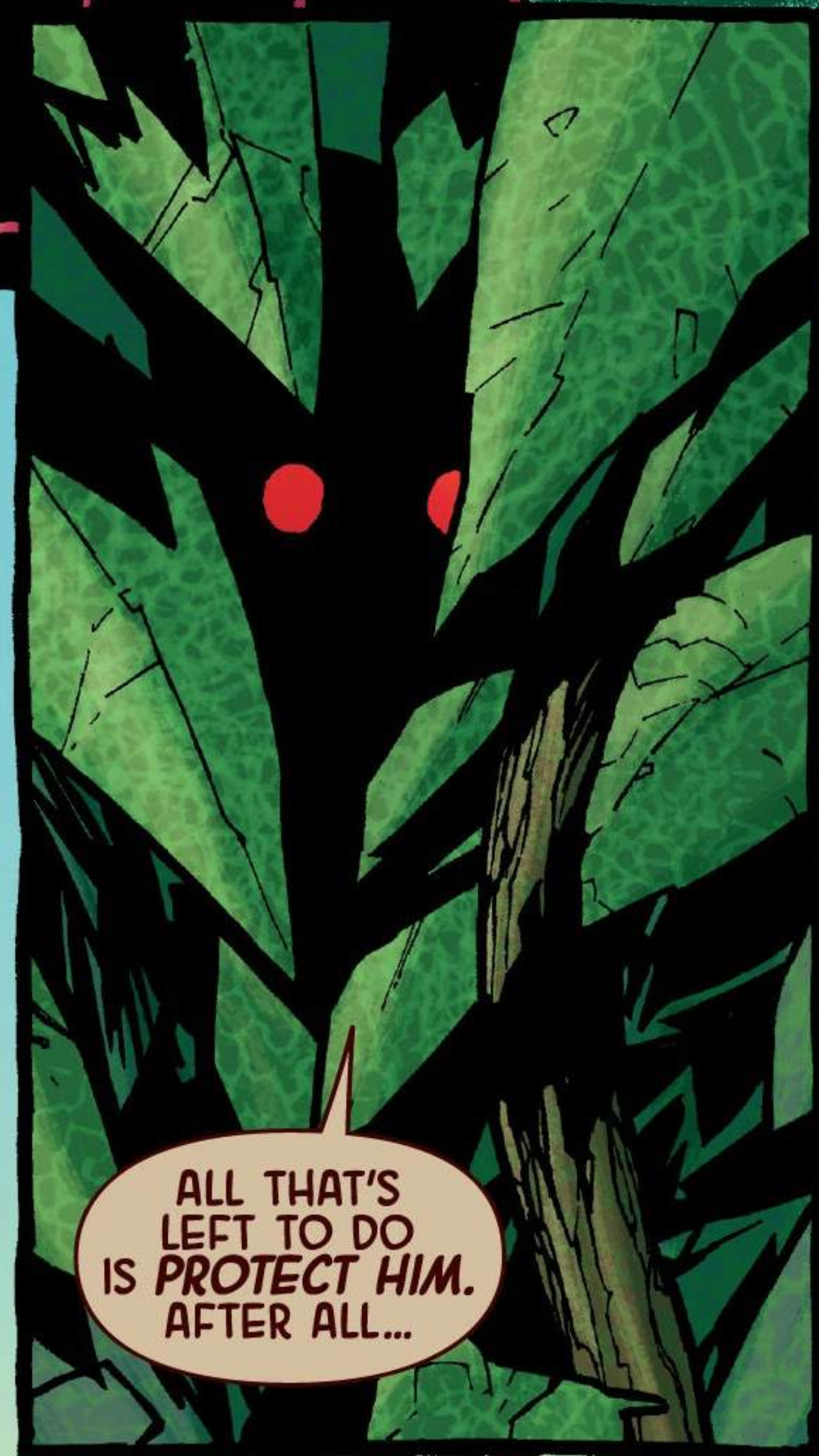
HOW LONG?
HOW LONG UNTIL
THEY'RE *BACK*? WE
WON'T BE ABLE TO
KEEP THE GALAXY AWAY
FROM THIS PLACE
FOREVER.



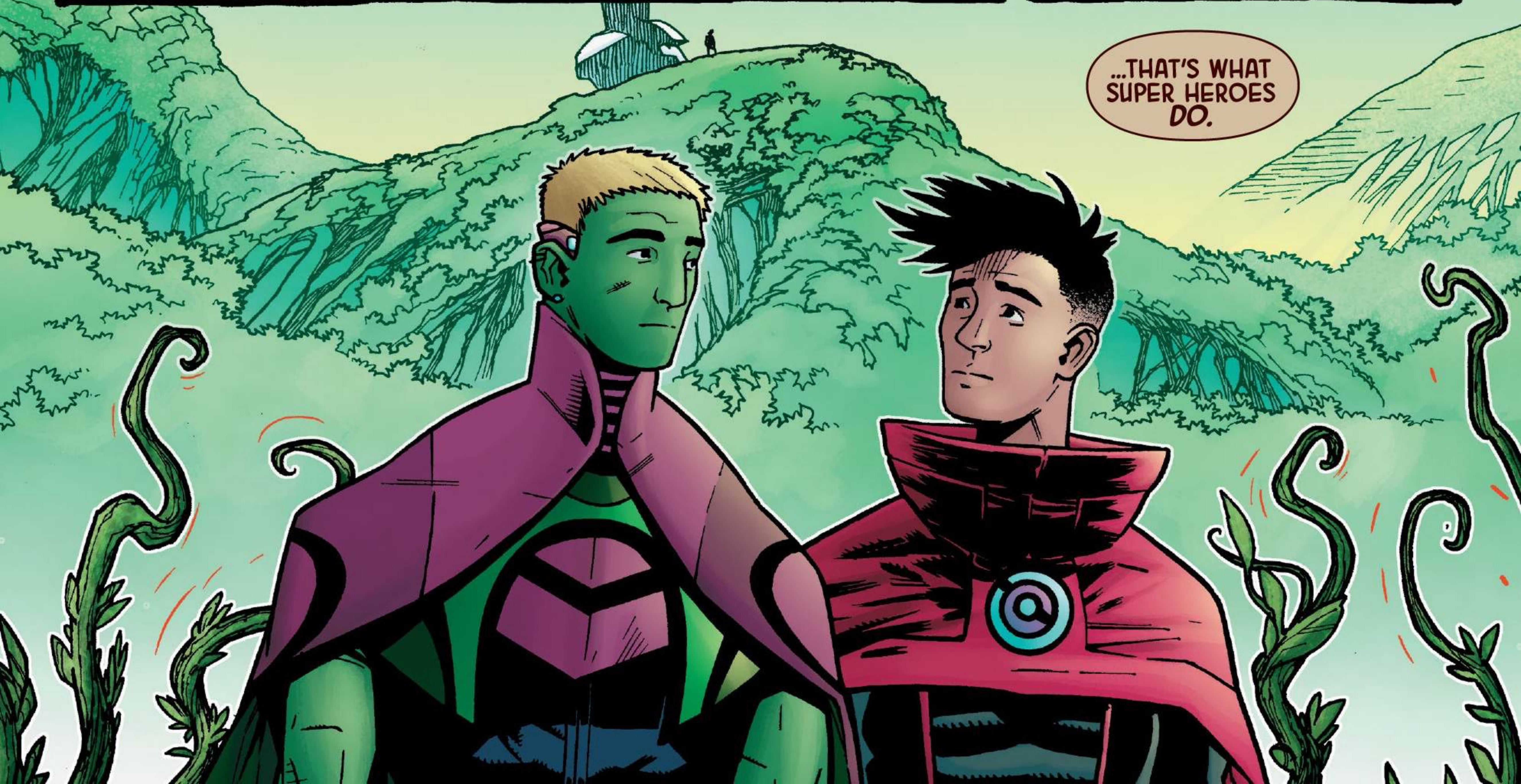
BETTER TRY.
TELL THE *GALACTIC
COUNCIL* THIS PLACE
IS PROTECTED...AND
LEAVE THE REST
TO US.

OUR FRIEND
NEEDS OUR HELP.
AND EVERY PERSON YOU
THINK IS DEAD? THEY'RE
HERE, UNDER THE SOIL,
STANDING AT OUR
BACKS.

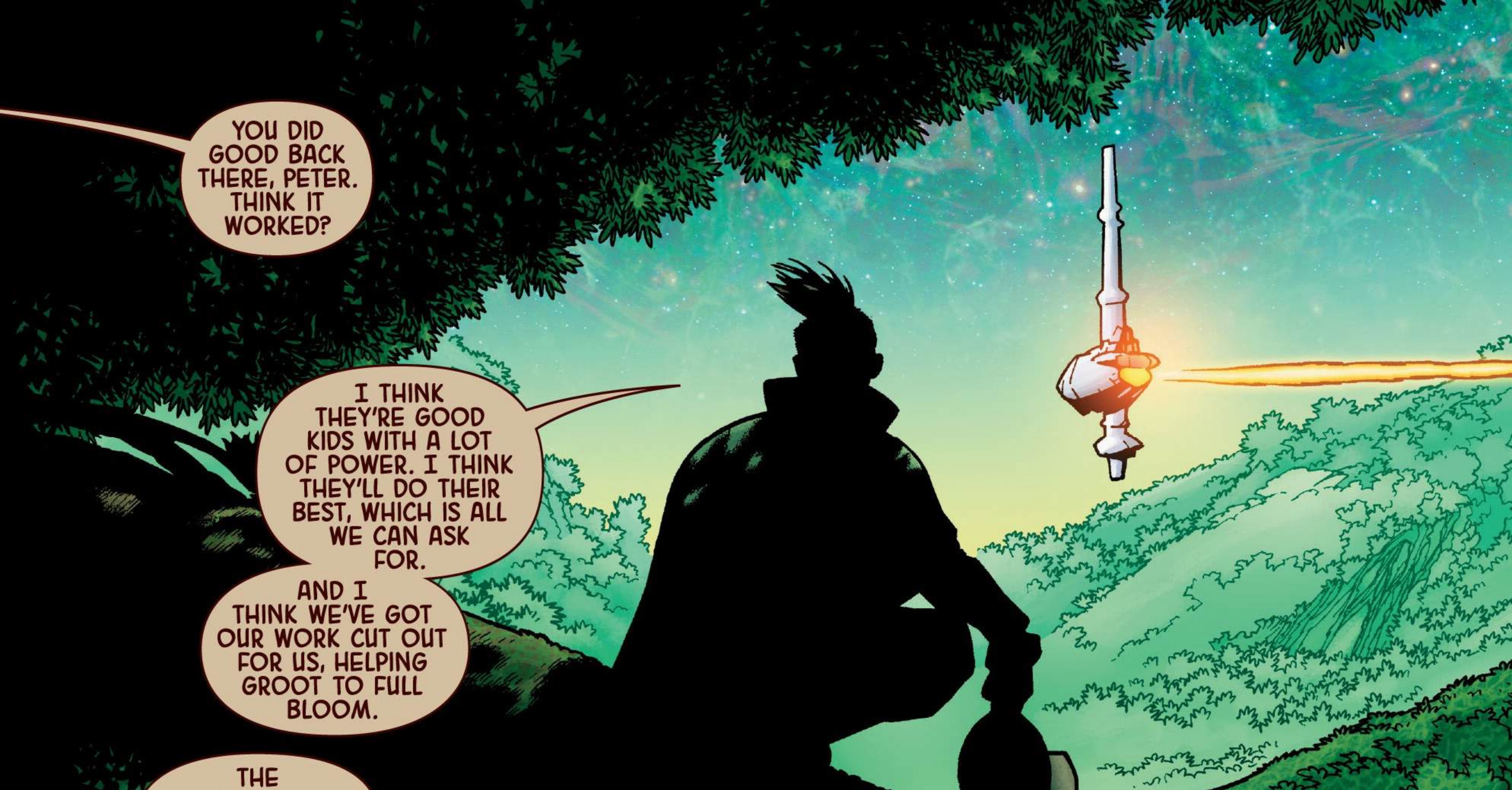
THE WORST
IS BEHIND US--
WHAT GROOT STARTED,
GROOT'S GONNA
FINISH.



ALL THAT'S
LEFT TO DO
IS *PROTECT HIM*.
AFTER ALL...



...THAT'S WHAT
SUPER HEROES
DO.



YOU DID
GOOD BACK
THERE, PETER.
THINK IT
WORKED?

I THINK
THEY'RE GOOD
KIDS WITH A LOT
OF POWER. I THINK
THEY'LL DO THEIR
BEST, WHICH IS ALL
WE CAN ASK
FOR.

AND I
THINK WE'VE GOT
OUR WORK CUT OUT
FOR US, HELPING
GROOT TO FULL
BLOOM.

THE
STAR-LORD'S
BACK TO SAVING
FOLKS. IT'S GOOD
TO SEE.

YEAH, WELL.
MIGHT'VE DONE
ENOUGH DAMAGE
IN THE MEANTIME
THAT IT WON'T
MATTER.

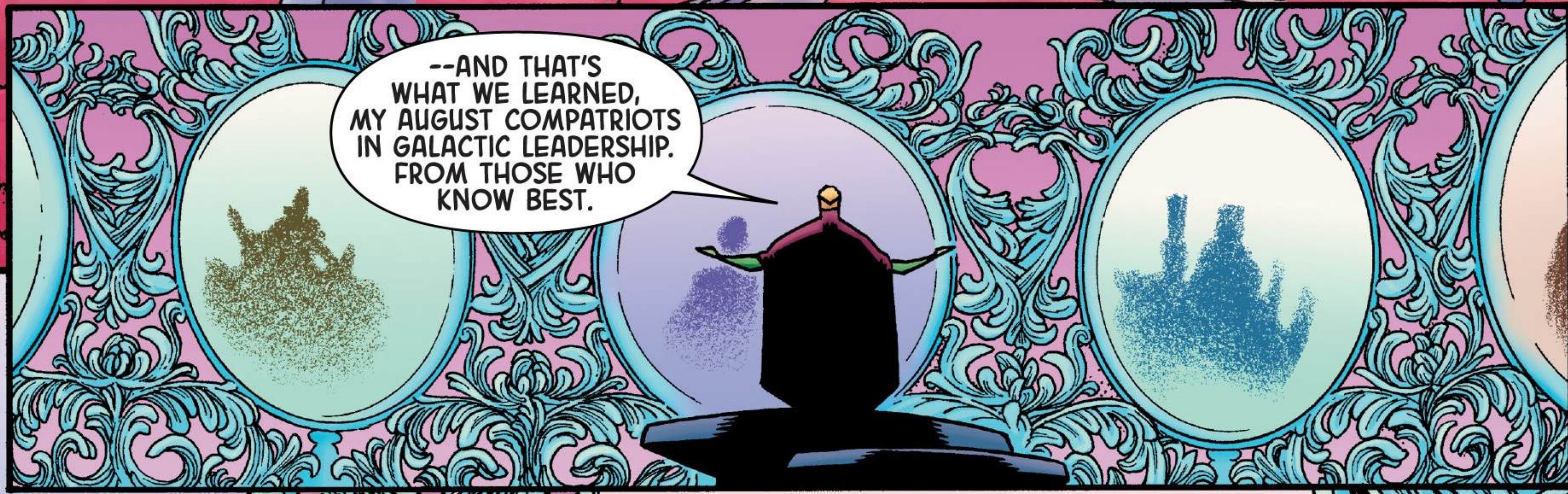
YOU'RE
NOT WORRIED
ABOUT *THEM*.
YOU'RE WORRIED
ABOUT *HER*.

YEAH...



...I'M
WORRIED
ABOUT
HER.

**THE COUNCILWORLD.
TWELVE HOURS LATER.**



--AND THAT'S
WHAT WE LEARNED,
MY AUGUST COMPATRIOTS
IN GALACTIC LEADERSHIP.
FROM THOSE WHO
KNOW BEST.

AS A RESULT
OF THIS NEW
INFORMATION, THE
KREE/SKRULL EMPIRE
PETITIONS **EVERY**
MEMBER OF THE
GALACTIC
COUNCIL--

--TO VOTE
YEA ON A TREATY
OF **NONINTERFERENCE**
WITH GROOTSPACE
UNTIL SUCH TIME AS
THE CYCLE IS--

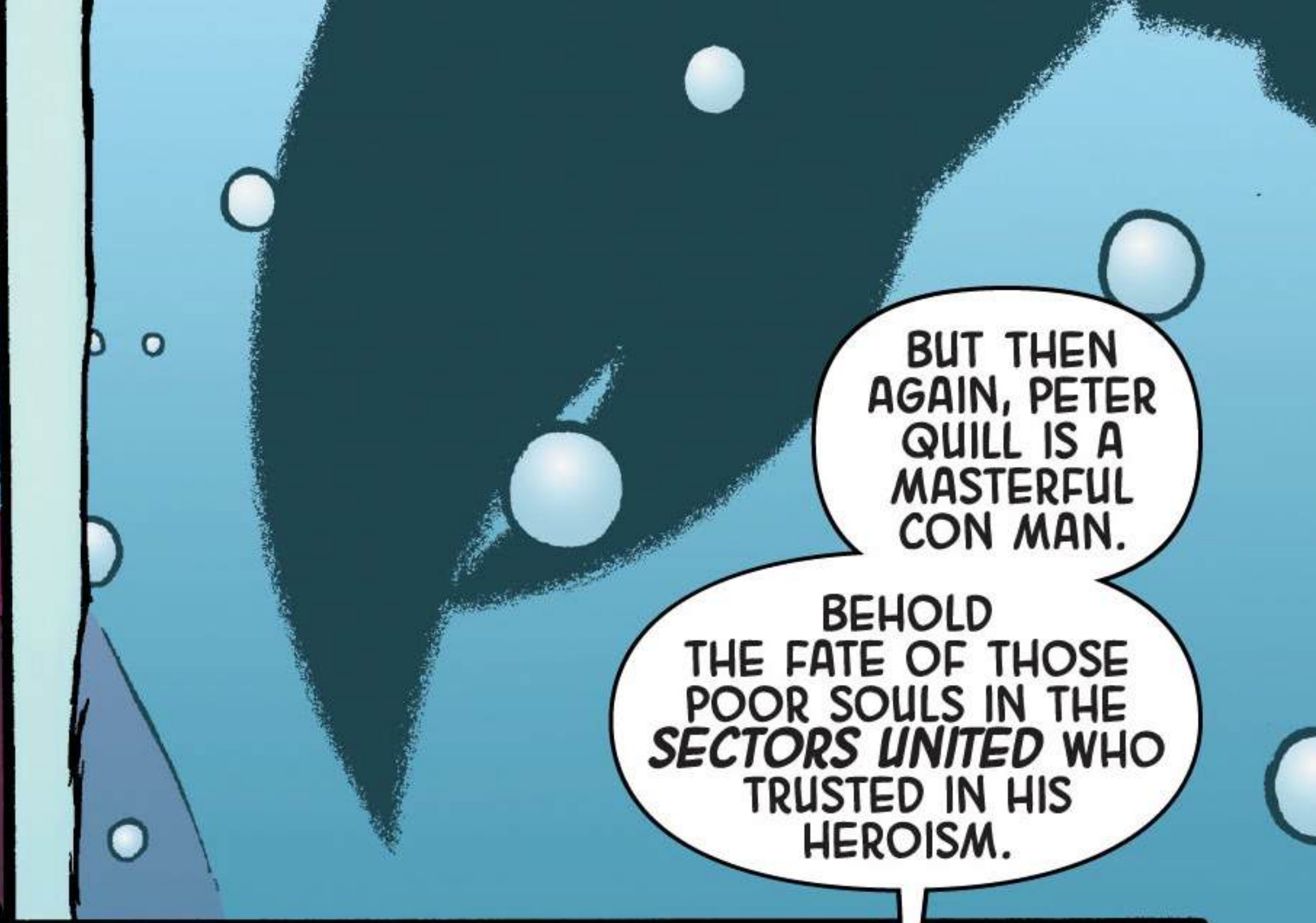
NO.



I
THINK
NOT.



I'LL ADMIT
SOME SADNESS IN
SEEING THE GREAT
EMPEROR DORREK-VELL
BE SO CONFOUNDED
BY THE LIES OF THOSE
WE ONCE CALLED
GUARDIANS.



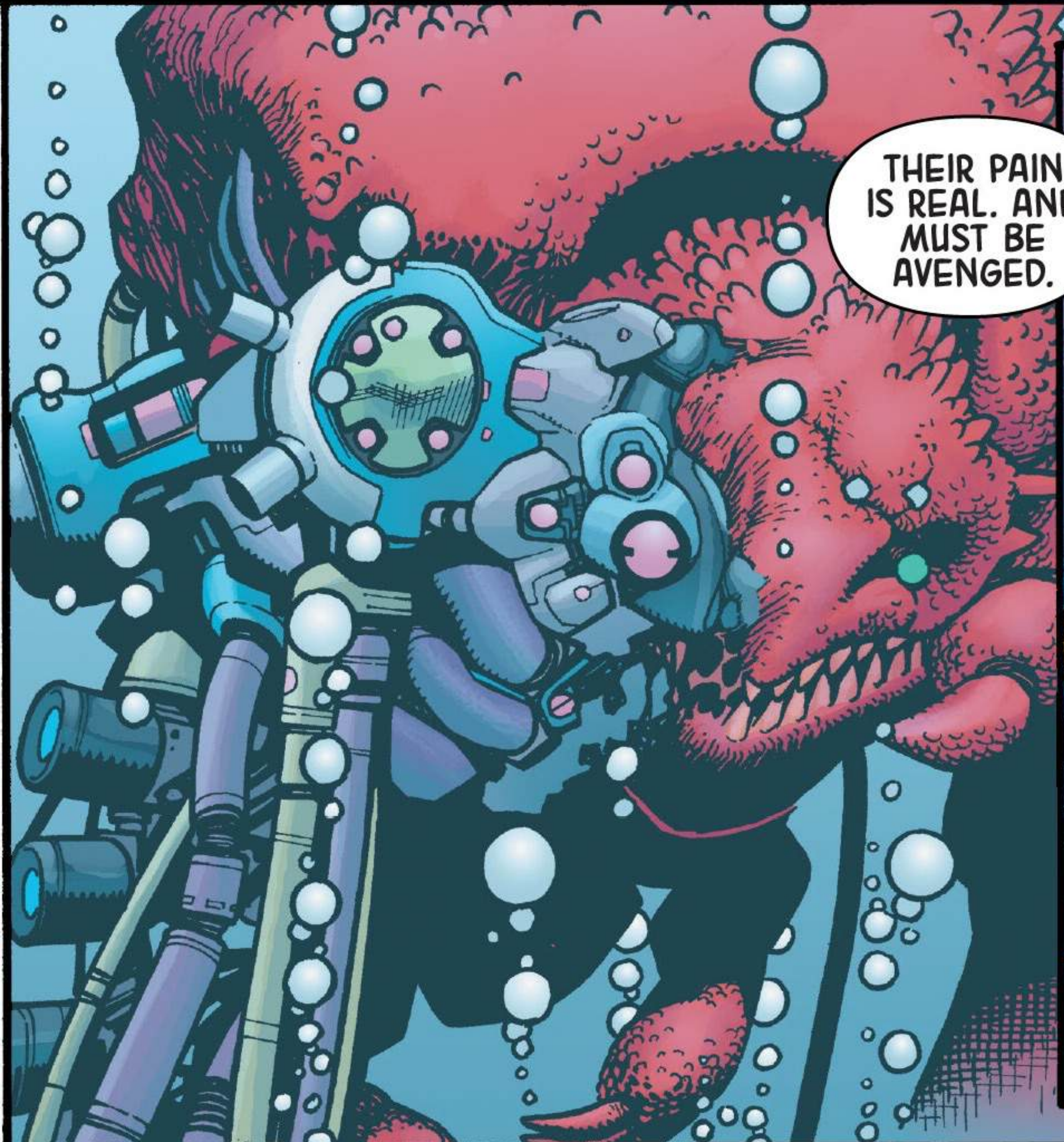
BUT THEN
AGAIN, PETER
QUILL IS A
MASTERFUL
CON MAN.

BEHOLD
THE FATE OF THOSE
POOR SOULS IN THE
SECTORS UNITED WHO
TRUSTED IN HIS
HEROISM.



SPARED
THE WORST
OF HIS OUTLAW
MALICE, UNLIKE OUR
HEROES OF THE
GILDED HUNT.*

*SEE ISSUE 3! --DS



THEIR PAIN
IS REAL. AND
MUST BE
AVENGED.



WE REQUIRE
NOTHING OF THIS
BODY BUT YOUR
INACTION.



THE SO-CALLED
MANIFOLD TERRITORIES
WILL BE **CLEANSED** OF THE
TERROR OF GROOTFALL BY
THE SOLAR POWER OF OUR
ARCANIC FLEET, FOR THE
SAFETY OF ALL GALACTIC
PEOPLES...

...AND MY
CRIMINAL **BROTHER**
AND HIS BAND OF
MURDERERS WILL BE
BROUGHT TO
HEEL.



NOW
SCURRY BACK
TO YOUR
GOLDEN THRONE
AND SPLINTERED
PEOPLE,
CHILD...

A full-page comic book illustration of Empress Victoria. She is a Black woman with voluminous black hair, wearing a white and gold armored suit with a red cape. She holds a large, ornate silver spear. The background is a deep blue space filled with a large, complex space station or city structure, smaller ships, and a bright yellow sun. A speech bubble is in the upper right.

...EMPRESS
VICTORIA AND THE
ASTROLOGERS OF
SPARTAX WILL TAKE
IT FROM HERE.

**NEXT:
THEM WHO SOW
AND THOSE THAT REAP**





8

"THEM WHO SOW AND THOSE THAT REAP"

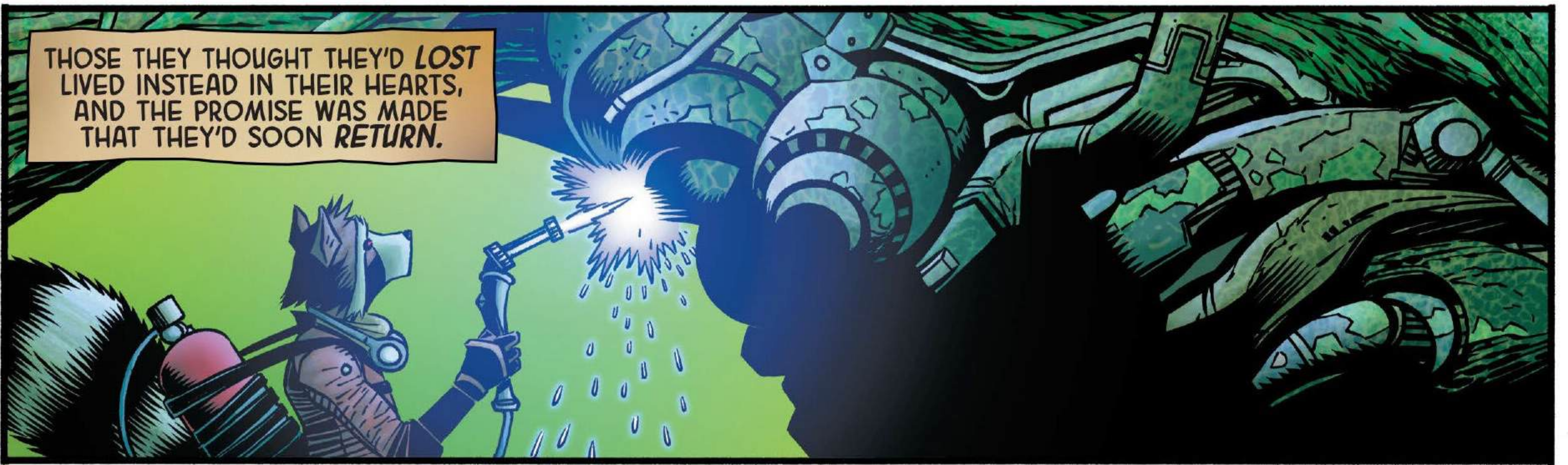
IN THOSE FINAL DAYS
BEFORE THE **GREAT
CONFLAGRATION**,
GROOTSPACE WAS
WILD AND FREE.



AND THOSE WHO
PROTECTED HER
WERE POSSESSED OF
A PEACE UNLIKE ANY
THEY'D EVER KNOWN.



THOSE THEY THOUGHT THEY'D **LOST**
LIVED INSTEAD IN THEIR HEARTS,
AND THE PROMISE WAS MADE
THAT THEY'D SOON **RETURN**.



AND SO THEY HAD BEGUN
TO BUILD...AND PLAN...AND
DANCE...AND LOVE AGAIN.



AFTER ALL THE PAIN AND HARDSHIP,
AFTER HOPE HAD SEEMED LOST IN THE
ENDLESS BLACK FOR FAR TOO LONG...

...THE GUARDIANS OF
THE GALAXY WERE
NO LONGER A FIRE.



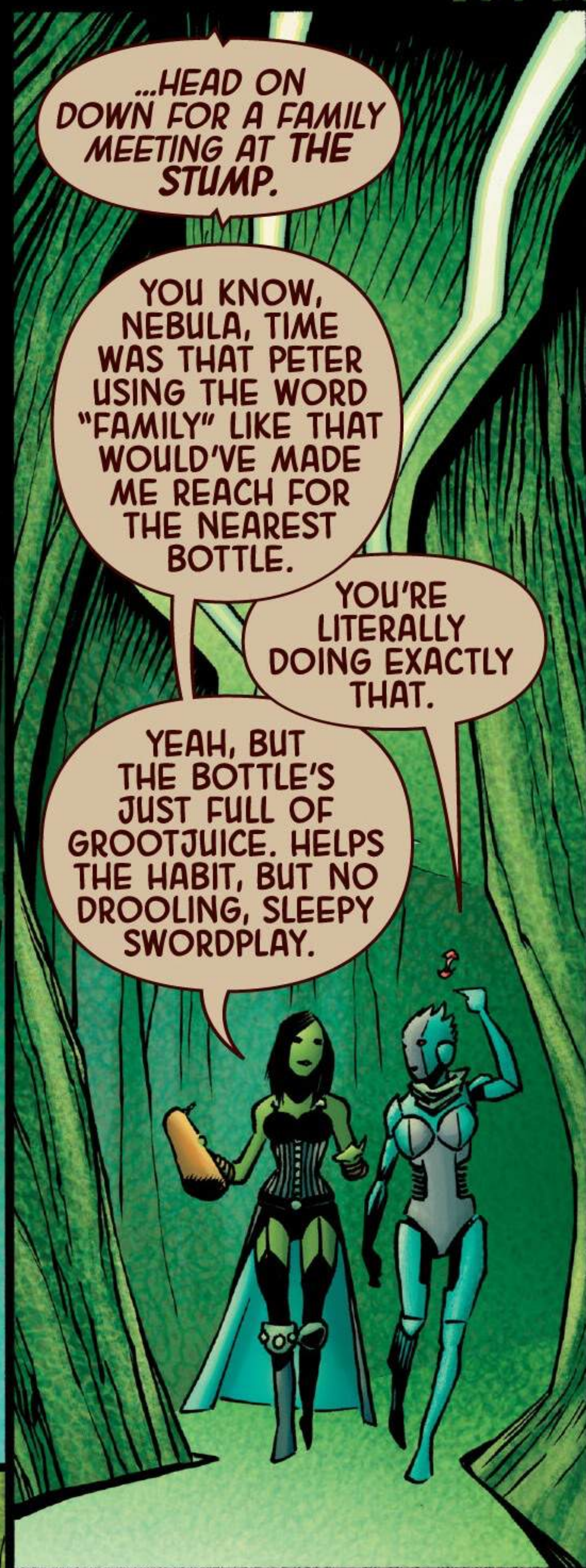


THEY WERE
GROOT.



STAR-LORD
TO GUARDIANS.
WE'RE OUT OF FTL
IN FIFTEEN.

THAT MEANS
IT'S MISSION-
BRIEFING TIME. SO
IF YOU'RE HEARING THE
DULCET TONES OF
MY VOICE...



...HEAD ON
DOWN FOR A FAMILY
MEETING AT THE
STUMP.

YOU KNOW,
NEBULA, TIME
WAS THAT PETER
USING THE WORD
"FAMILY" LIKE THAT
WOULD'VE MADE
ME REACH FOR
THE NEAREST
BOTTLE.

YOU'RE
LITERALLY
DOING EXACTLY
THAT.

YEAH, BUT
THE BOTTLE'S
JUST FULL OF
GROOTJUICE. HELPS
THE HABIT, BUT NO
DROOLING, SLEEPY
SWORDPLAY.



THIRTY
DAYS SOBER
TOMORROW.

THAT'S...
WOW,
GAMORA.

I'M
REALLY
PROUD OF
YOU.

THANKS, SIS.
I'M PROUD OF
ME TOO.



HEY, MANTIS!
YOU WANNA WALK WITH
US? MAYBE EXPLAIN WHAT THE
HELL YOUR WHOLE DEAL IS AND
STOP HIDING IN YOUR ROOM
ALL WEIRD-LIKE?

NOPE!



I THINK I'LL
JUST GO MY OWN
WAY. GETTING SOME
VERY WEIRD SOUNDS
FROM THE COSMIC
FABRIC TODAY.

BUT I'LL SEE
YOU IN A MINUTE--
AFTER ALL, ALL
ROADS LEAD TO
THE STUMP!



YEAH, BUDDY, I KNOW
I'M GONNA NEED
MORE SPACE. THIS IS
JUST THE **CORE
HOUSING**--

--OUR SPECIAL
LITTLE **PROJECT**
HERE'S GONNA NEED
A LOT MORE THAN THAT
BEFORE SHE'S READY
TO HELP YOU
FRUIT.

YEAH,
'CEPT OUR LITTLE
SCARE TACTIC TO
THE REST OF THE
GALAXY'S ONLY
GONNA KEEP 'EM
AWAY FOR SO
LONG...

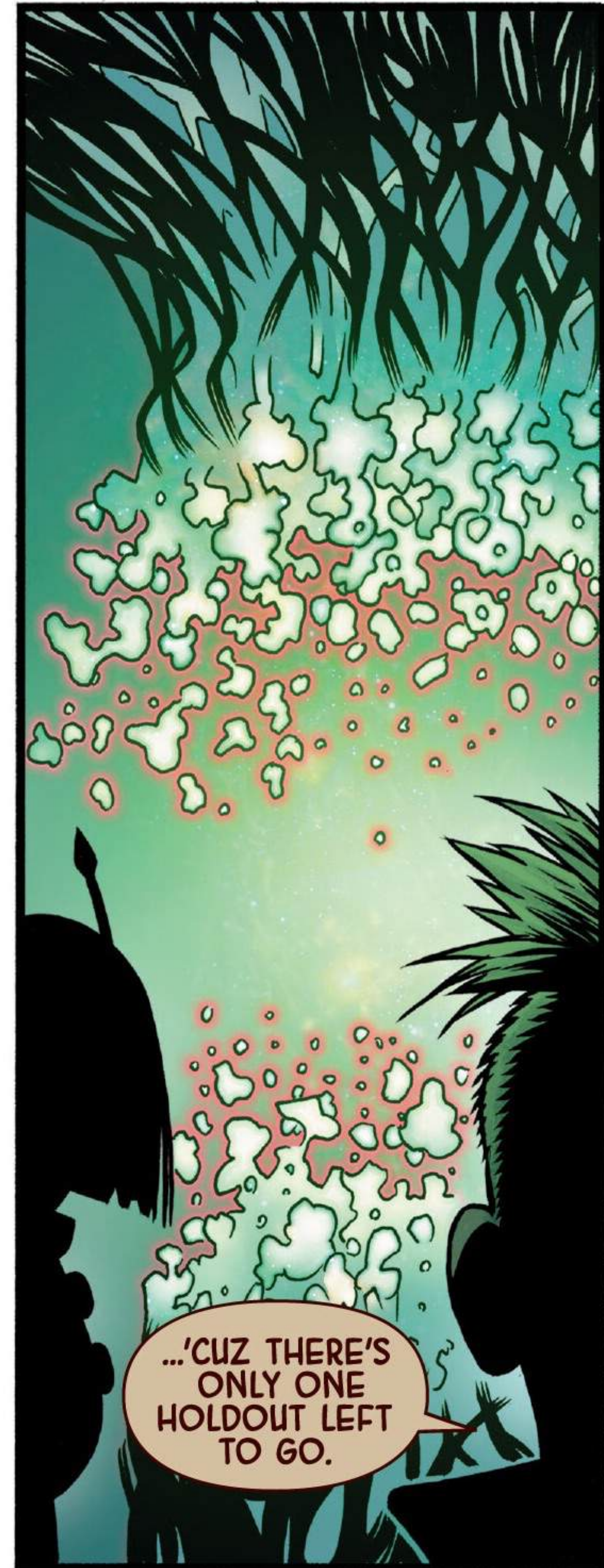
...SO HOW
'BOUT YOU STOP
COMPLAININ' IN MY
HEAD AND LET US
DO THE JOB YOU
GROOTED US FOR?

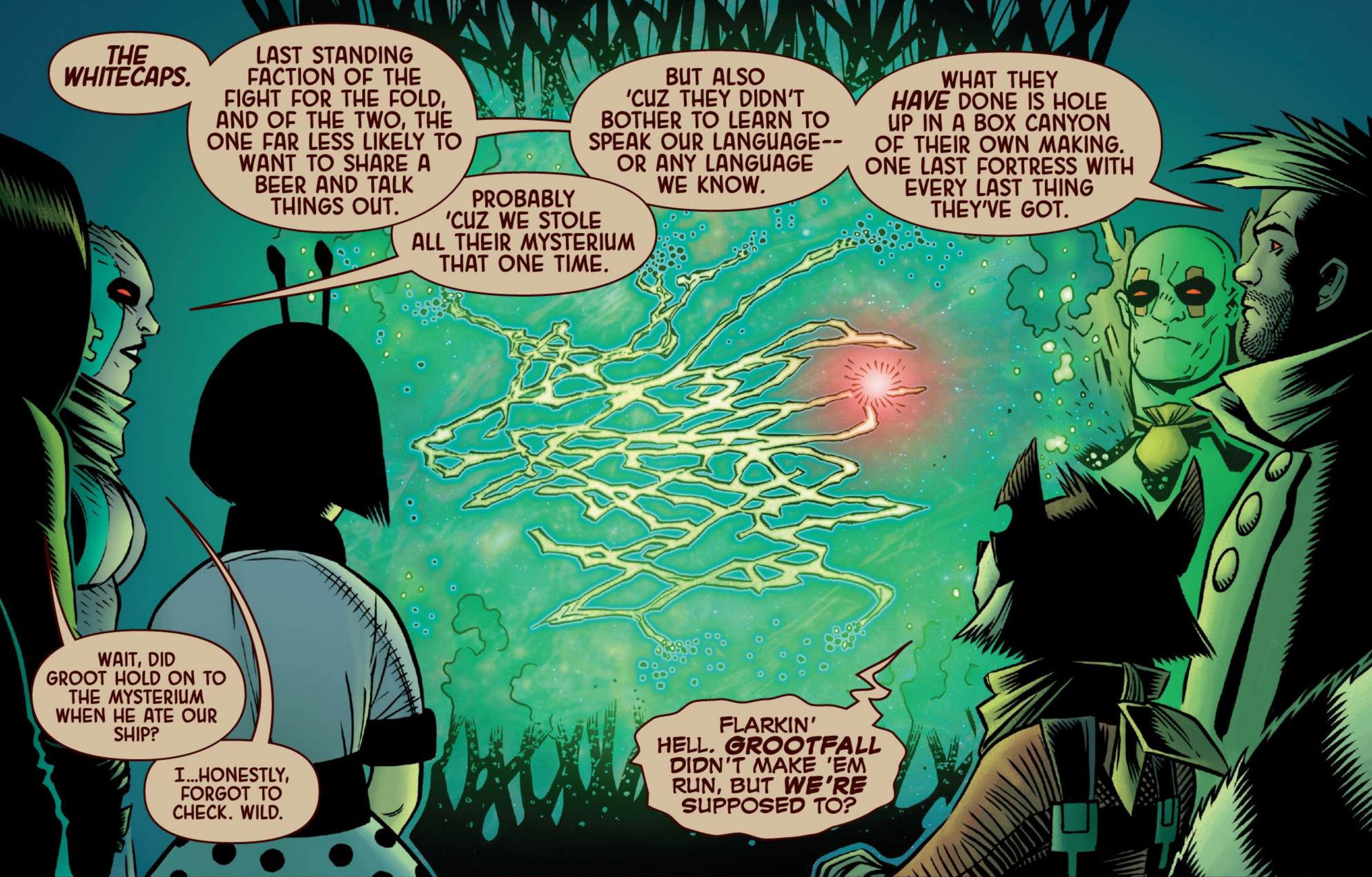


ANY OF
THE REST OF
YOU WISH WE HAD
A LITTLE MORE
HELP AROUND
HERE?

GROOTSPACE
IS A HELL OF A
LOT OF PLANETS TO
GUARD WITH ONE
SHIP AND SIX
LOSERS.

WE ARE
NOT LOSERS,
ROCKET
RACCOON...





THE
WHITECAPS.

LAST STANDING
FACTION OF THE
FIGHT FOR THE FOLD,
AND OF THE TWO, THE
ONE FAR LESS LIKELY TO
WANT TO SHARE A
BEER AND TALK
THINGS OUT.

PROBABLY
'CUZ WE STOLE
ALL THEIR MYSTERIUM
THAT ONE TIME.

BUT ALSO
'CUZ THEY DIDN'T
BOTHR TO LEARN TO
SPEAK OUR LANGUAGE--
OR ANY LANGUAGE
WE KNOW.

WHAT THEY
HAVE DONE IS HOLE
UP IN A BOX CANYON
OF THEIR OWN MAKING.
ONE LAST FORTRESS WITH
EVERY LAST THING
THEY'VE GOT.

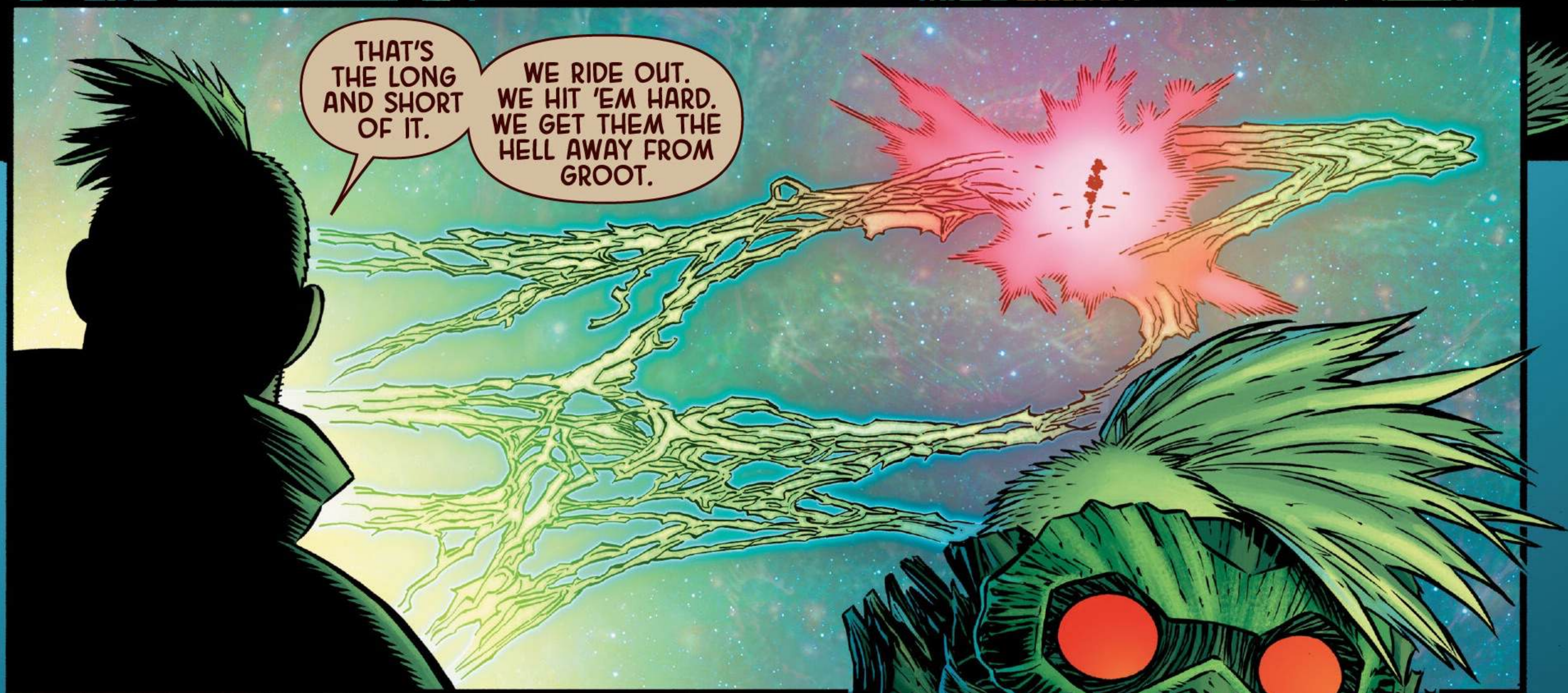
WAIT, DID
GROOT HOLD ON TO
THE MYSTERIUM
WHEN HE ATE OUR
SHIP?

I...HONESTLY,
FORGOT TO
CHECK. WILD.

FLARKIN'
HELL. **GROOTFALL**
DIDN'T MAKE 'EM
RUN, BUT **WE'RE**
SUPPOSED TO?

THAT'S
THE LONG
AND SHORT
OF IT.

WE RIDE OUT.
WE HIT 'EM HARD.
WE GET THEM THE
HELL AWAY FROM
GROOT.

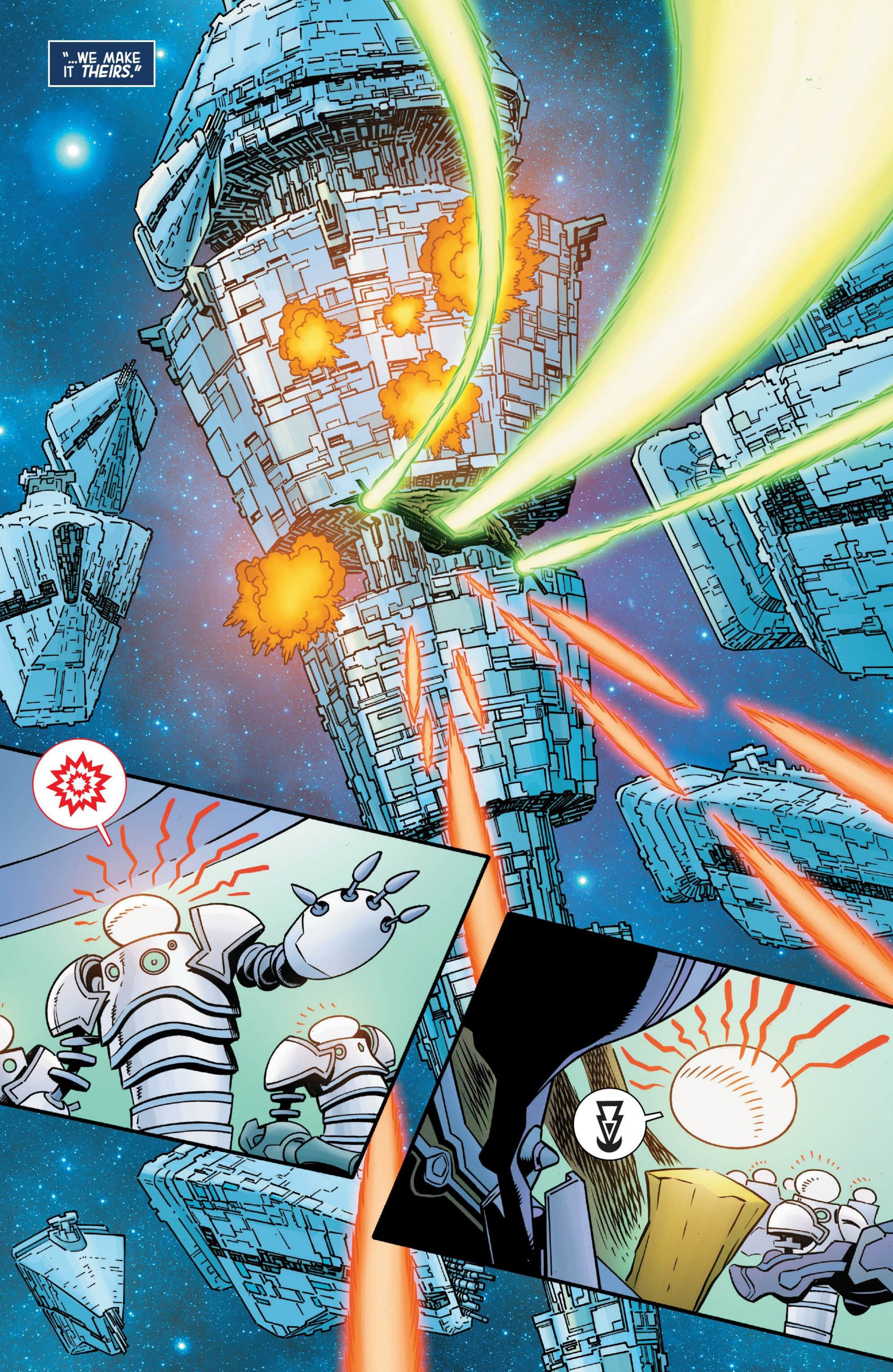


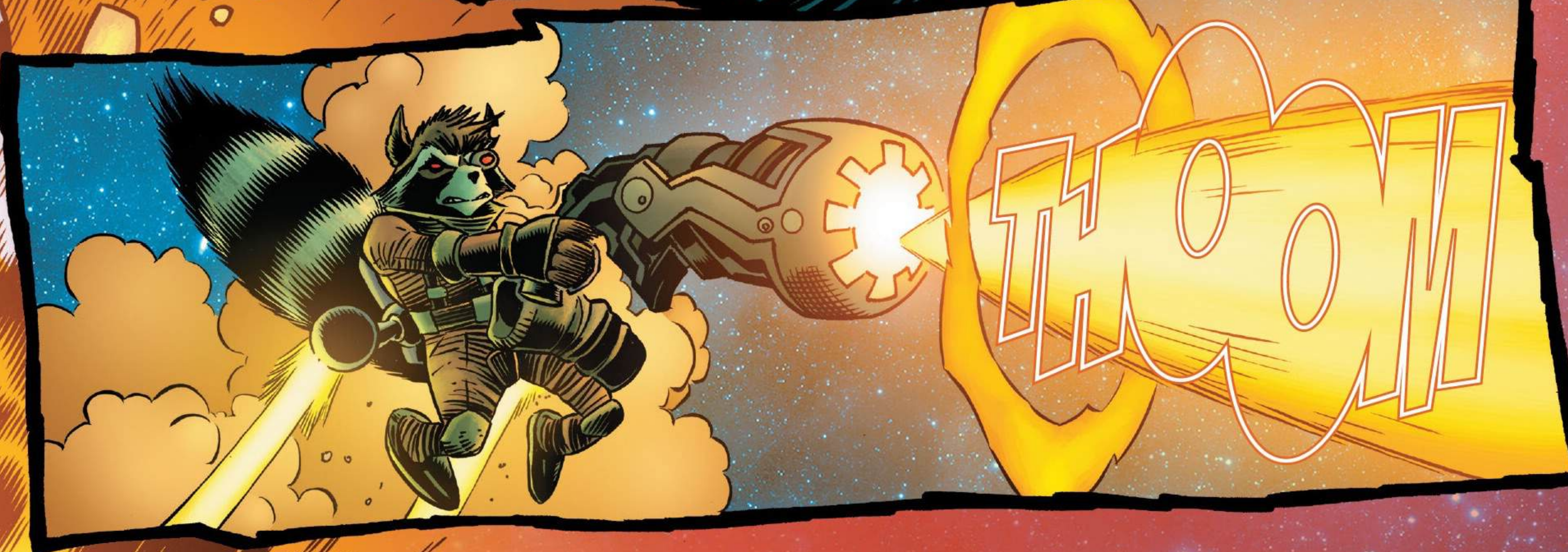
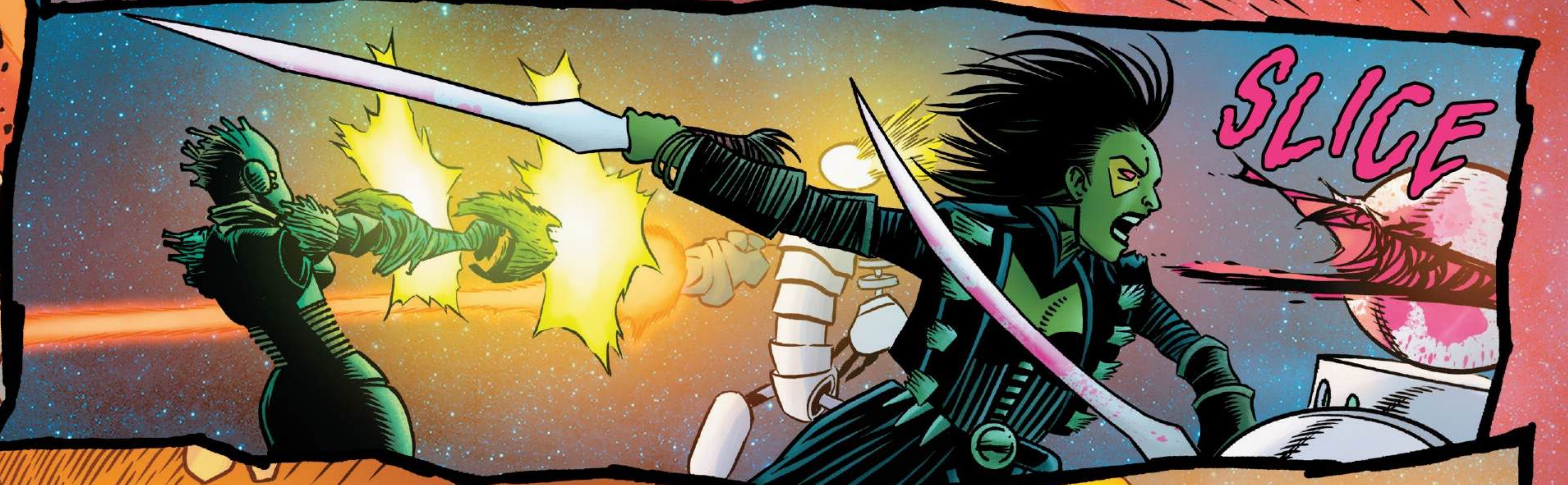
NOW GEAR
UP, GUARDIANS.
LAST TIME WE FACED
THE WHITECAPS, IT
WAS OUR FINAL
STAND.

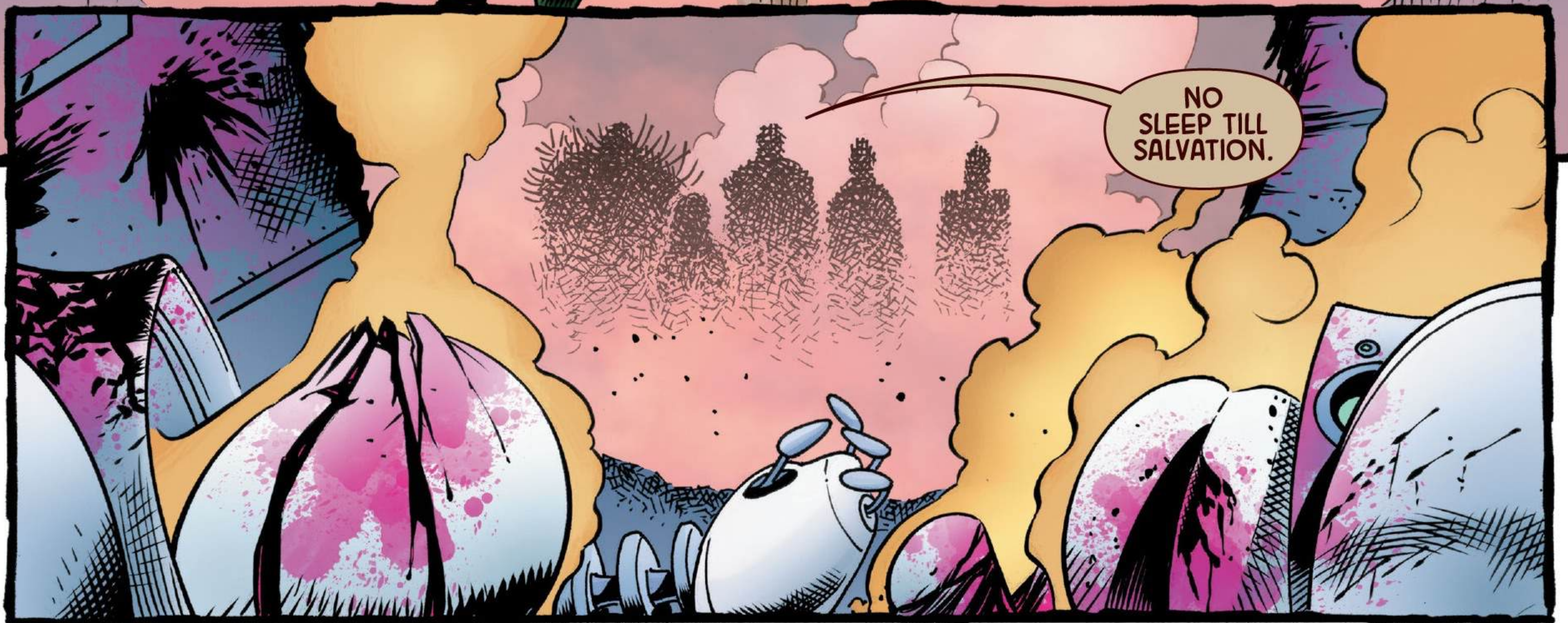
THIS
TIME...



"...WE MAKE
IT *THEIRS*."











OKAY, THAT'S **EXTREMELY** WEIRD.

THIS ISN'T A COMPUTER NETWORK AT ALL. AND THESE THINGS DON'T SEEM TO HAVE A DETECTABLE CONSCIOUSNESS.

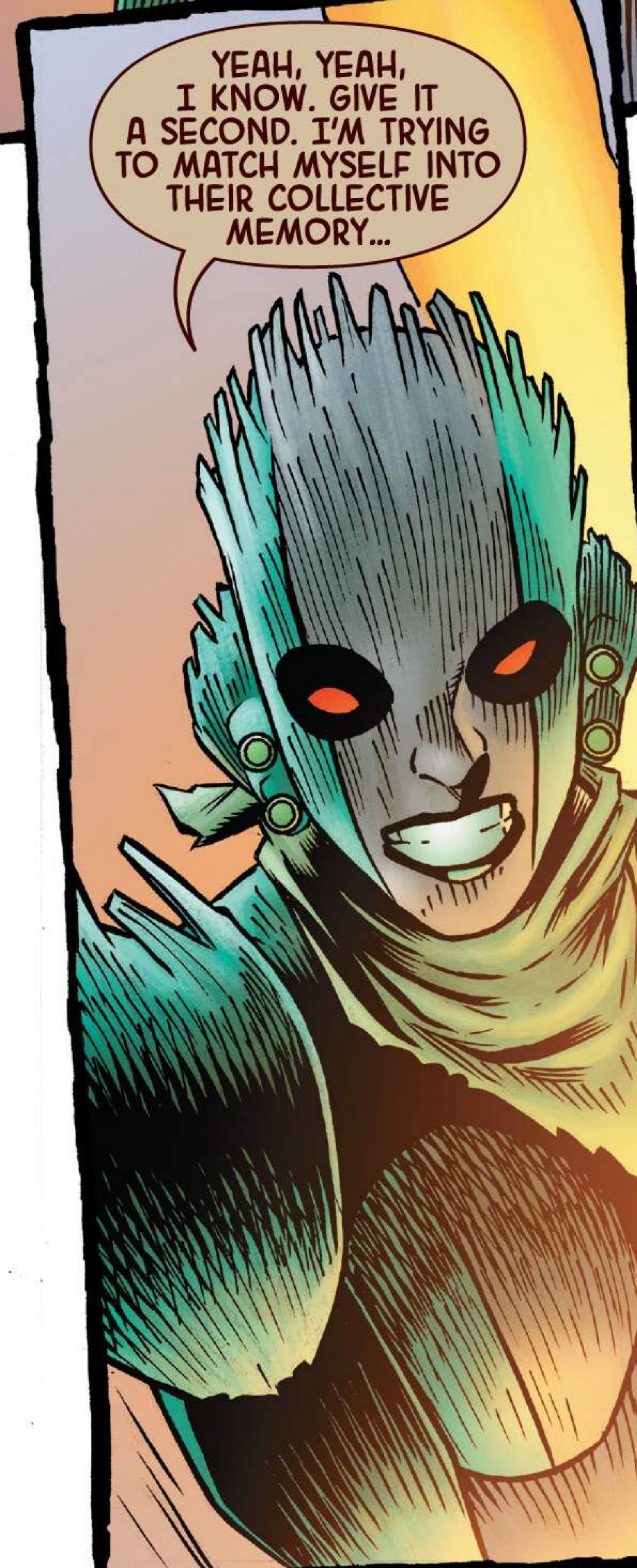
IT'S LIKE WE'RE FIGHTING ALGORITHMS STUCK IN EMPTY SHELLS. NO FEELINGS, NO DESIRES. BIOTECH, BUT NO...NO **LIFE**.

AT LEAST NOT **SENTIENT** LIFE. THEY'RE JUST KIND OF...**LOOPING**.

TO LIVE WITHOUT DESIRE IS TO LIVE A **PERFECT** LIFE.



THERE'S GOT TO BE **SOMETHING**. NOTHIN'S **NOTHIN'**. THEY'RE **FIGHTIN'** FOR GLOBB'S SAKE!

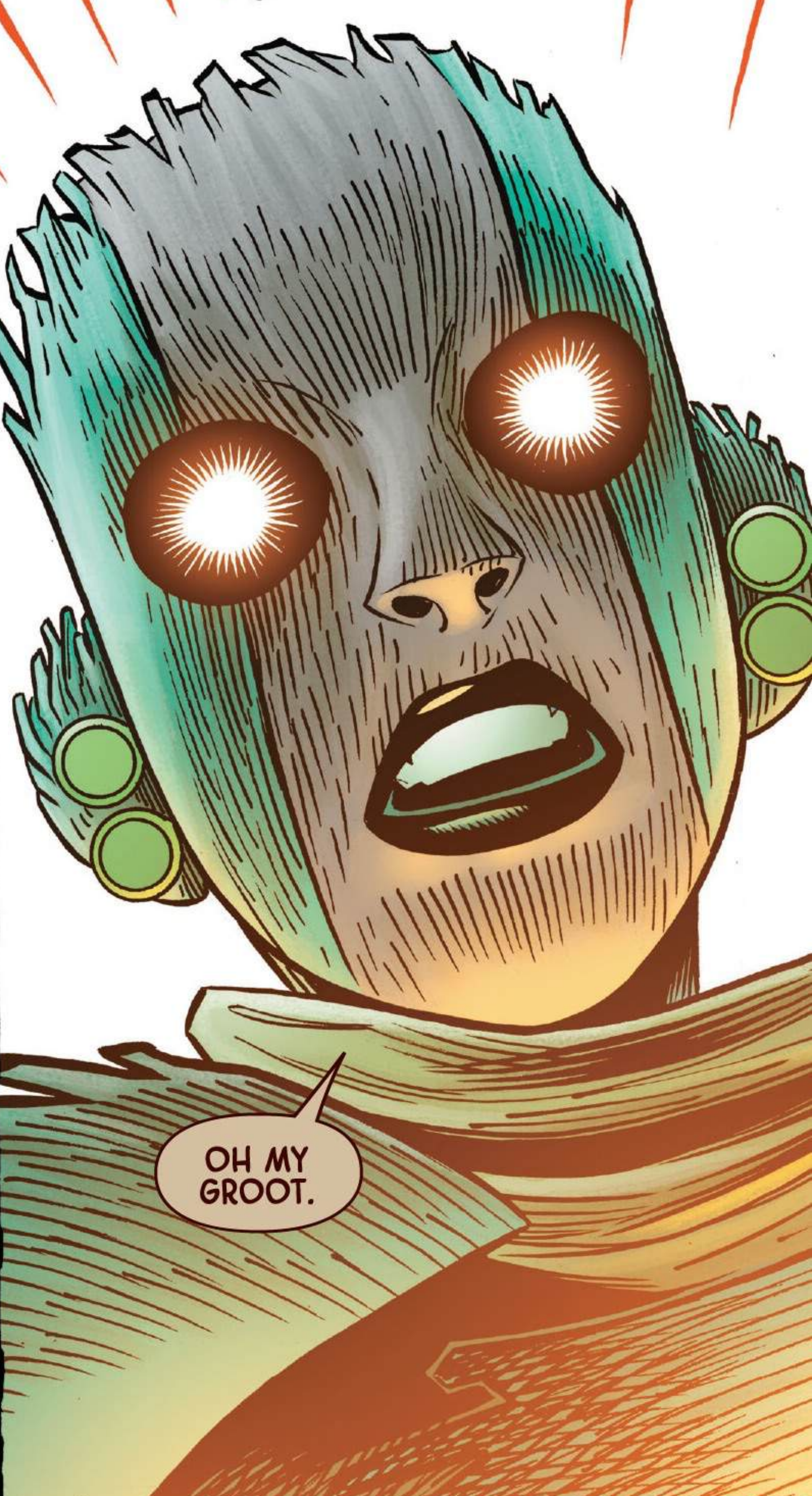


YEAH, YEAH, I KNOW. GIVE IT A SECOND. I'M TRYING TO MATCH MYSELF INTO THEIR COLLECTIVE MEMORY...



...BUT IT GOES DEEP. WHATEVER THEY ARE, THEY'RE **ANCIENT**.

THE ONLY THING LIKE IT I'VE EVER ENCOUNTERED IS...



OH MY GROOT.



IN THE BEGINNING,
THE GARDENER CREATED
THE BRANCHWORLDS.

FIVE GARDENS OF SUNS AND
PLANETS, EACH ALIKE, LOOKED
AFTER BY HIS GREATEST CREATION,
WHICH HE NAMED GROOT.

BUT THE TREES
WERE NOTHING
WITHOUT POLLEN
TO SEED THEM.

AND SO THE
GARDENER
CREATED US, HIS
POLLEN OF LIFE,
THAT HE MIGHT
BREATHE OUR
ESSENCE ACROSS
THE BRANCHWORLDS.

BUT ALL THINGS
DIE. EVEN THE
PLANS OF AN ELDER
OF THE UNIVERSE.

AND SO IT WAS
WITH THE
BRANCHWORLDS.
ALL FIVE, ACROSS
THE GALAXY, DEAD
IN A SINGLE
SEASON. WITH
NOTHING LEFT FOR
US TO POLLINATE.

IT IS BECAUSE OF
THIS THAT THE
GARDENER CREATED
THE ROTATION.

ONE BRANCHWORLD
WOULD THRIVE WHILE
THE OTHERS LAY WAITING.
DRIED ROOTS UNDER
ANCIENT SOIL. SO WHEN
THE TIME CAME FOR
THE OLD GARDEN...

...GROOT WOULD
BEGIN ANEW
IN THE NEXT.

AND WE WOULD GROW.
AND WHEN THE TIME WAS
RIGHT, WE WOULD FOLLOW.

TO BEGIN THE CYCLE
ANEW, BOTH GROOT AND
POLLEN FOLLOWING A SINGLE
UNCEASING COMMAND.

THE
FOLD WAS
NEVER DEAD
SPACE.

IT
WAS JUST
WAITING...

"...FOR ITS NEXT
CHANCE AT *LIFE*."

THAT'S...
THAT'S **THE**
GRANOPY. GROOT'S...
GRANDMOTHER.

THAT'S THE
TREE THAT DIED
AND STARTED THE
CYCLE ALL OVER AGAIN.
WHY IS IT...WHY IS
IT **HERE**?

SHE'S
SACRED TO
THEM. A RELIC
OF THE LAST
GARDEN.

BECAUSE
THIS HAS **ALWAYS**
BEEN GROOTSPACE--
WE JUST DIDN'T
KNOW IT.

AND WE
NEARLY KILLED
THEM ALL. WHAT
KIND OF MONSTERS
ARE WE?

KILLING IS
NOT NECESSARILY
MONSTROUS, PETER
QUILL. ON **RATHALAMZI**.
THEY KILLED. WE KILLED.
WE WERE KILLED. NOW
WE LIVE.

VIOLENCE
IS CHANGE.

LOOK, I
DON'T WANT
US TO DO ANY
UNNECESSARY
MURDER. WILD,
I KNOW.

BUT,
PETER...





...THIS IS
WHERE GROOT
WANTED US
TO BE.



RIGHT.
BECAUSE WE'RE
NOT PROTECTING
HIM FROM
INVADERS...

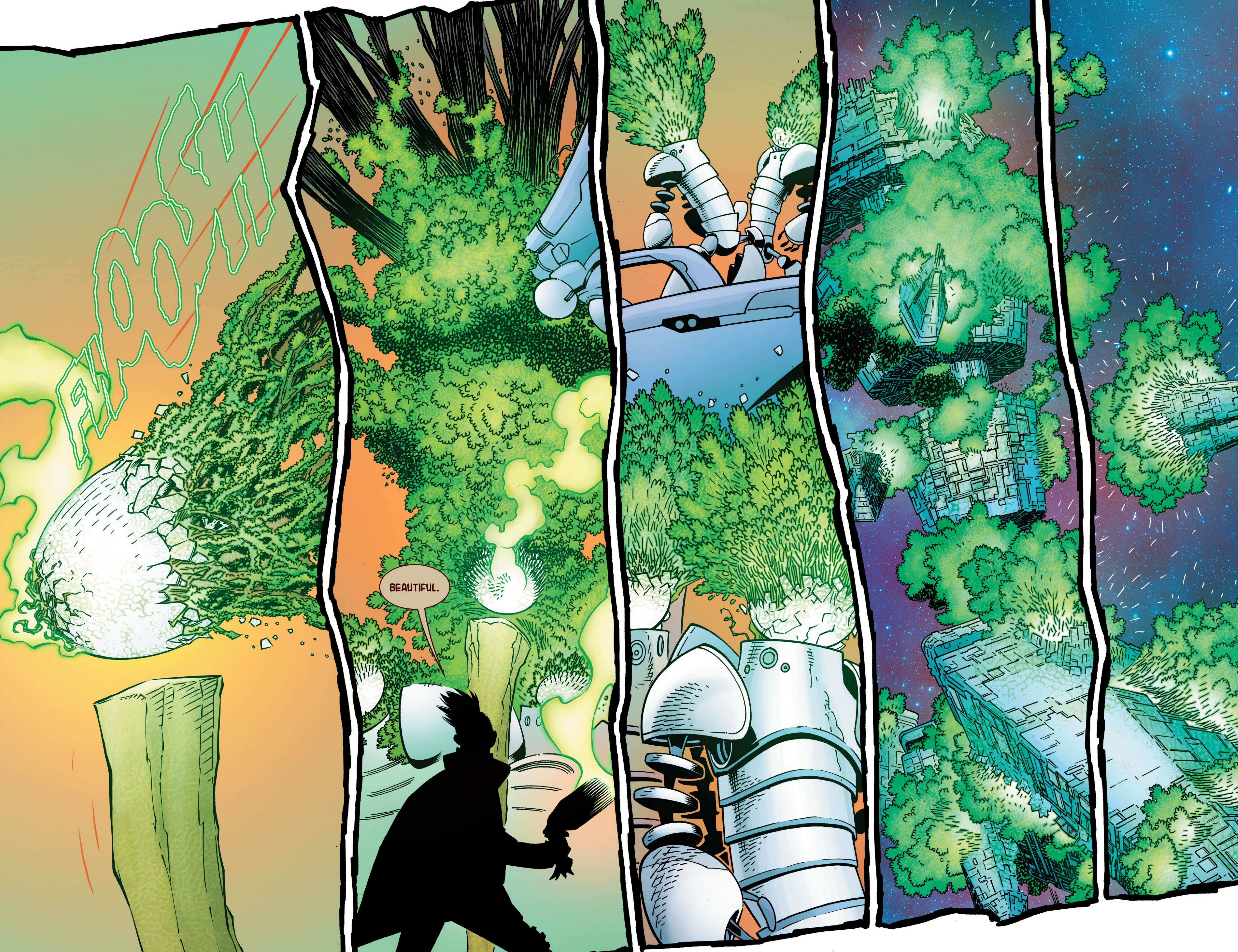


...WE'RE
WELCOMING
THEM HOME.

BLAM



KR
ITCH



BEAUTIFUL.



THIS IS GOOD.

THE GROOTWORLDS WERE DORMANT... BUT NOW THEY'RE STARTING TO SPROUT.

AND WHAT I'M BUILDIN'...OH BABY, WE'RE GONNA GET THOSE SPROUTS TO FLOWER.



"WE'RE GOING TO BLOOM OUR FRIENDS RIGHT BACK TO LIFE."



THIS IS GROOT.



I'M PROUD OF YOU, PETER.

MANTIS?

WAIT, WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN THIS ENTIRE---?



BEEP BEEP BOOP BEEP BOOP BEEP BOOP BEEP BOOP

NO TIME FOR THAT! INCOMING TRANSMISSION FROM HIS HIGHNESS EMPEROR DORREK THE HULKING!

BEEP BOOP BEEP BOOP BOOP BOOP BEEP BEEP BEEP BOOP BOOP

"TRIED TO STOP THEM."

"NO SUCH LUCK."

"COMING SOON TO A GROOTSPACE NEAR YOU--"

"--THE SPARTAX IMPERIAL ARMADA."

THE ARMADA?! I TURN MY BACK ON YOU GLORBGLOBS FOR ONE MINUTE--

"YOUR SISTER, QUEEN VICTORIA, IS ON SOME KIND OF CRUSADE. SHE SAYS YOU BURNED AN ENTIRE SHIP OF SPARTAX. WELL, NOW..."



"...SHE'S GOING
TO BURN YOUR
EVERYTHING."



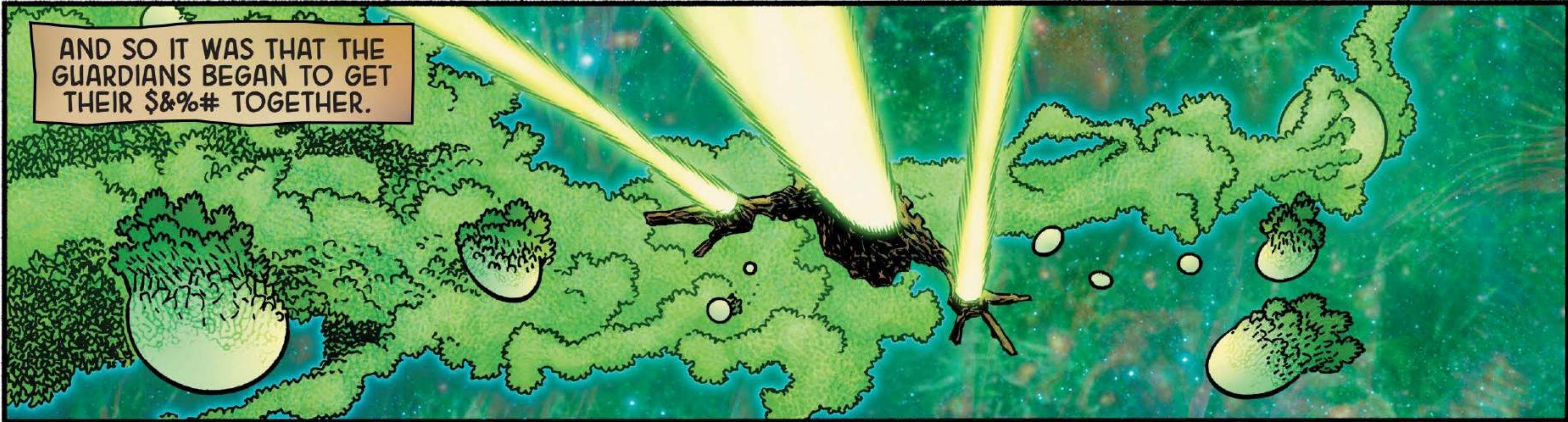


#7 GAMORA VARIANT BY **CORY SMITH, OREN JUNIOR & BRYAN VALENZA**



9

"THE MAGNIFICENT MANTIS"



AND SO IT WAS THAT THE GUARDIANS BEGAN TO GET THEIR \$&%# TOGETHER.



FINDING PURPOSE IN THE BUILDING OF SOMETHING NEW.

IN THE GEARS AND CIRCUITS OF A MACHINE THAT WOULD BE THEIR SALVATION.



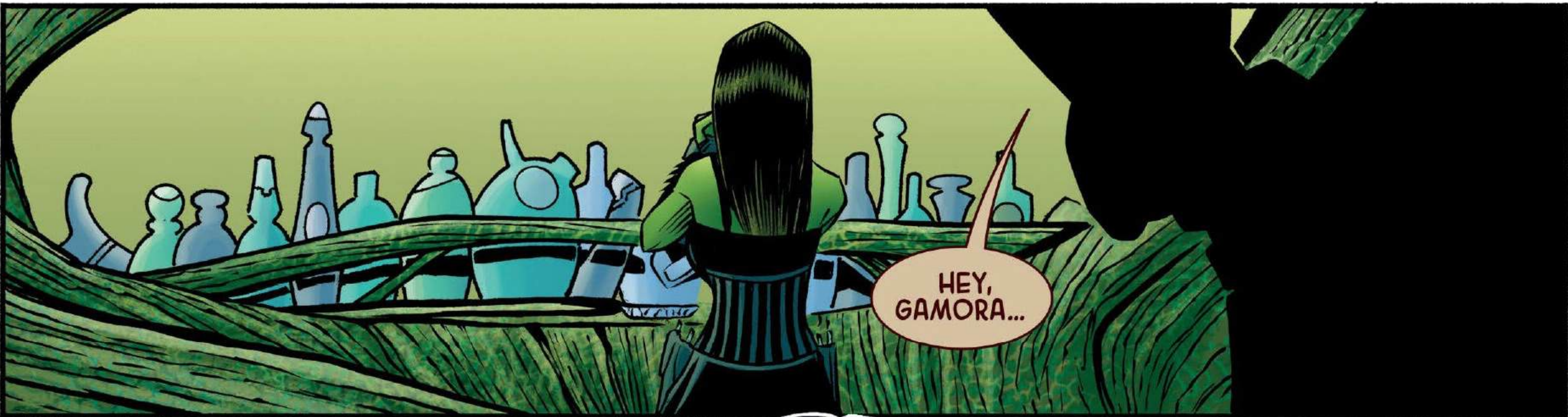
IN THE ACCEPTANCE OF THEIR LOSS AND THE PROMISE OF REBIRTH.

IN THE HERDING OF NEW SEEDS TO GROOTED SOIL.



AT LEAST...

...MOST OF THEM DID.



HEY, GAMORA...



...THAT THERE'S A WHOLE LOTTA BOOZE.



YEAH?
AND
WHAT'S IT TO
YOU, MANTIS?
I GET ENOUGH
LECTURES FROM
MY SISTER.



I'M NOT LECTURING, JUST
OBSERVING. SEEMS LIKE WHEN
GROOT DID HIS LITTLE ASSIMILATION
TRICK, HE ENSURED THAT WHICH
WE **NEEDED MOST** WAS
SAVED. LITTLE **GIFTS**.

TOOLS
AND PARTS.
ENGINES.
PETER'S SILLY
HAT.

SAYS THE
WOMAN IN THE
SILLIEST HAT I'VE
EVER SEEN.

BUT WITH
YOU...



YEAH, THAT
GROOT, HE
REALLY **GETS**
ME.
OH \$&%#,
WHAT ABOUT
THE---?



MYSTERIUM?
I'M NOT SURE
GROOT COULD
DESTROY IT IF
HE **TRIED**.

WHICH
IS GOOD,
'CUZ IT'S VERY
IMPORTANT.

FOR
DRAX.



OH. I SEE.
YOU'RE HERE TO
PITCH ME.

ANOTHER
COMPLETELY BONKERS
IDEA FROM THE DISASSOCIATED
WEIRDO WHO WAS ONCE MY
FRIEND MANTIS?

GAMORA.
DON'T BE MEAN.
IT WON'T WORK
ON ME.



DRAX LIKES TO PRETEND HE
HAS **TRANSCENDED**
PHYSICAL DESIRES. THAT
HE'S LIVED SO LONG WITH
EMPTINESS THAT HE HAS
LEARNED TO CHERISH
THE VOID.

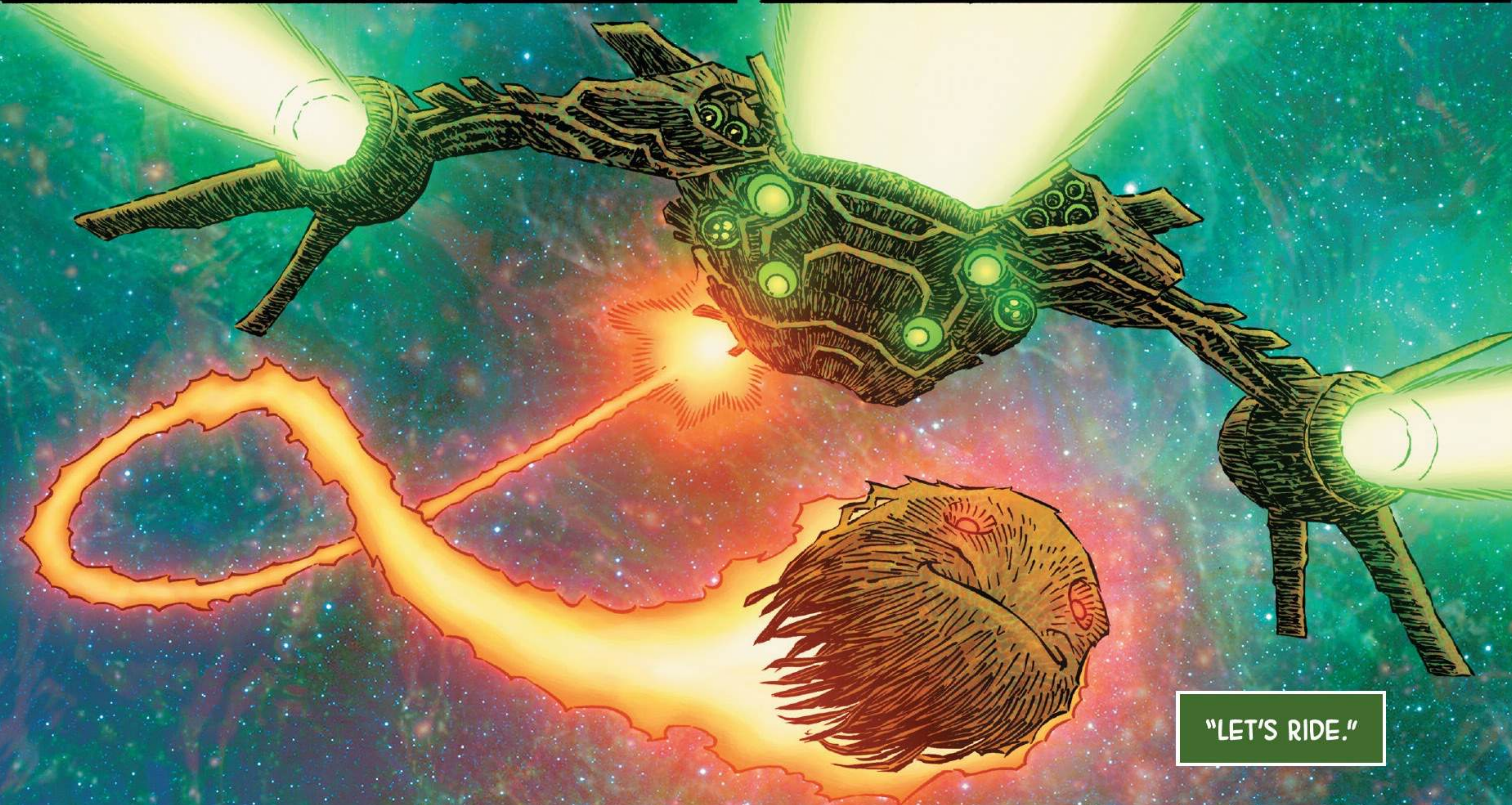
HE IS A
VERY GOOD
ACTOR.

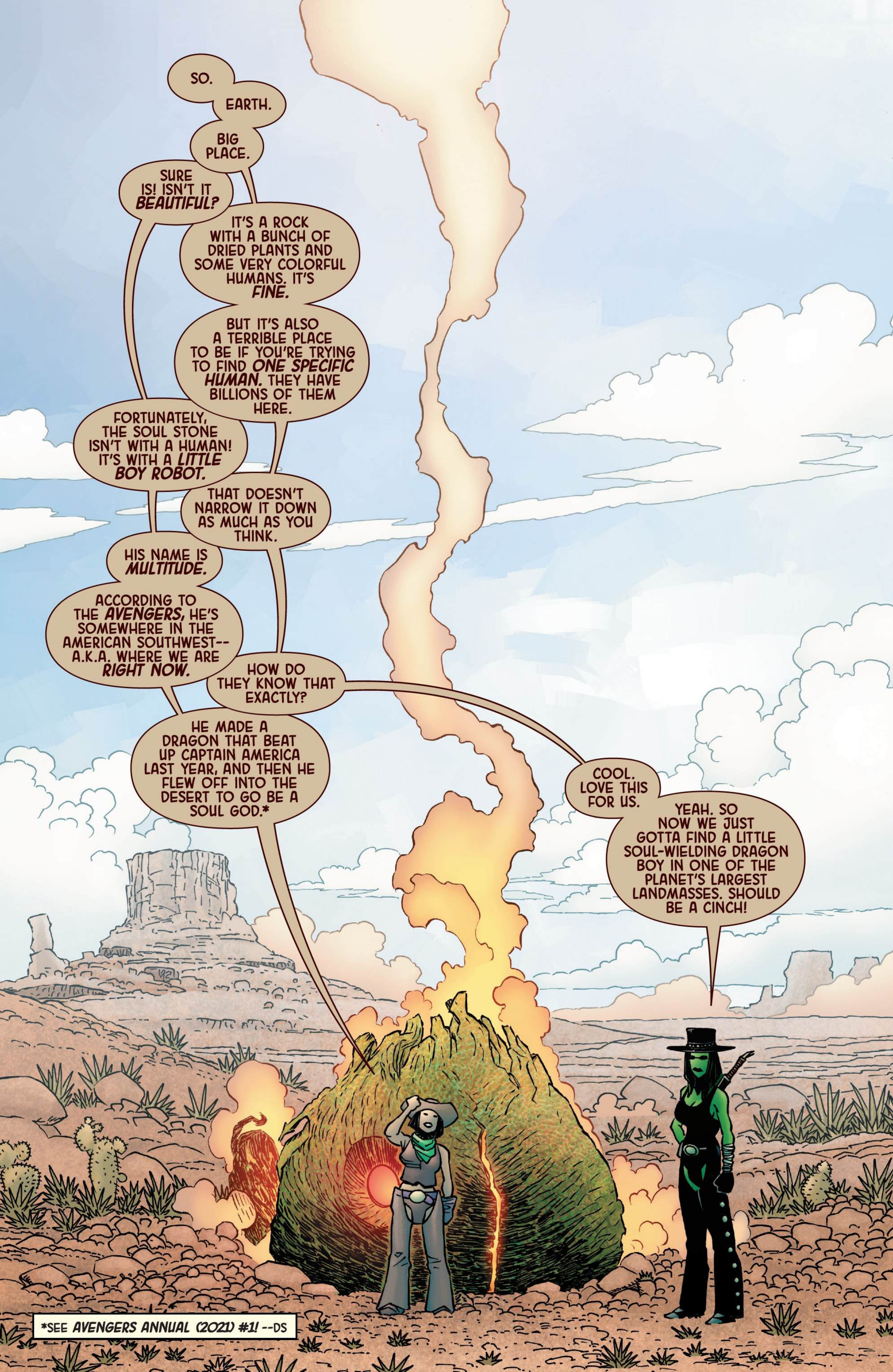
SO WHAT?
YOU WANT TO LET DRAX
LOOSE ON A SHOPPING SPREE
FOR **INFINITE DRIED MEAT**
OR THE **GALAXY'S BIGGEST**
COMMERCIALLY AVAILABLE
FLERKEN?

NO, GAMORA.
THE ONLY THING
THAT WILL HELP THE
SOUL OF DRAX...



...IS THE
SOUL OF
DRAX.





SO.

EARTH.

BIG
PLACE.

SURE
IS! ISN'T IT
BEAUTIFUL?

IT'S A ROCK
WITH A BUNCH OF
DRIED PLANTS AND
SOME VERY COLORFUL
HUMANS. IT'S
FINE.

BUT IT'S ALSO
A TERRIBLE PLACE
TO BE IF YOU'RE TRYING
TO FIND *ONE SPECIFIC*
HUMAN. THEY HAVE
BILLIONS OF THEM
HERE.

FORTUNATELY,
THE SOUL STONE
ISN'T WITH A HUMAN!
IT'S WITH A *LITTLE*
BOY ROBOT.

THAT DOESN'T
NARROW IT DOWN
AS MUCH AS YOU
THINK.

HIS NAME IS
MULTITUDE.

ACCORDING TO
THE *AVENGERS*, HE'S
SOMEWHERE IN THE
AMERICAN SOUTHWEST--
A.K.A. WHERE WE ARE
RIGHT NOW.

HOW DO
THEY KNOW THAT
EXACTLY?

HE MADE A
DRAGON THAT BEAT
UP CAPTAIN AMERICA
LAST YEAR, AND THEN HE
FLEW OFF INTO THE
DESERT TO GO BE A
SOUL GOD.*

COOL.
LOVE THIS
FOR US.

YEAH. SO
NOW WE JUST
GOTTA FIND A LITTLE
SOUL-WIELDING DRAGON
BOY IN ONE OF THE
PLANET'S LARGEST
LANDMASSES. SHOULD
BE A CINCH!

THEY
LEFT?!



WE'RE ON
A SPACESHIP--
HOW DID THEY
LEAVE?!

I AM
GROOT.

CLASSIC.

I SPENT SOME
TIME ON THE TRIP
MEDITATING ON THE KID'S
EXACT LOCATION. I GOT
A LOT OF STRANGE
ECHOES--

--A REALM OF
SALVAGED STEEL AND
PAINTED STONE--A
WELCOME AND WARNING
IN A SINGLE
BREATH...

IF
THERE'S ONE
THING I HATE MORE
THAN PROPHECY,
IT'S POETRY.

YOU REALLY
THOUGHT WE'D FIND
THIS KID BY JUST...
ENDLESSLY WANDERING
THE BACKWATER
DESERTS OF THIS
\$%&@ PLANET?

IT SEEMED
REASONABLE
AT THE TIME.

SO WHAT
I'M HEARING IS
THAT WE NEED TO
ASK SOME
QUESTIONS.

AND THEN
WE'RE GOING
TO NEED A
RIDE.

"YOU KNOW, I
COULDN'T HELP BUT
NOTICE, GAMORA...
YOU DIDN'T DO ANY
DRINKING IN THERE."

"DID I
NOT?"

"YOU ALSO DIDN'T
BREAK ANYONE'S FACE.
OR TEETH. OR HANDS."

DOOOOON'T STOP!
BELIEEEEEEEVING!

"YEAH,
WELL..."

"...GUESS
I FORGOT."

"I'LL BE SURE TO
BREAK SOME HANDS
NEXT TIME."

"JUST
FOR YOU."

SO...

...WE
ALL GOT
LITTLE GIFTS,
HUH?

WHAT DID
GROOT GIVE BACK
TO YOU?

"THE ONLY THING I REALLY
NEED RIGHT NOW, OTHER
THAN ALL OF YOU.

"I CALL
IT *DRESS*.

"THE COLLECTOR
HAD MADE A BIG SHOW
OF IT. A SENTIENT
GARMENT LINKED TO THE
USER'S BRAIN WAVES.
CLOTHES THAT
READ YOUR MIND.

"HE LIKED TO
BRAG THAT SHE
HAD THOUGHTS.
AND FEELINGS.

"AND THEN
HE KEPT HER
IN A CAGE.

"TIME WAS, I MIGHT'VE
LEFT HER THERE. BUT
AFTER THE PROSCENIUM...
AND THE COTATI INVASION...
AND *EVERYTHING ELSE*...

"...I SAW SOMETHING
IN *DRESS*. AND SHE
SAW SOMETHING IN
ME. A LOT OF
THINGS, PROBABLY.

"SO WE GOT
THE HELL OUT
OF THERE.

"AND SHE'S BEEN
KEEPING UP WITH
ME EVER SINCE."





"KEEPING UP WITH YOU."

THAT'S MORE THAN THE REST OF US HAVE MANAGED TO DO. EVER SINCE THE PROSCENIUM, YOU'VE SEEMED...NOT OKAY. FRACTURED.

BUT WE'RE GOING INTO A FIGHT IN THE MORNING, SO I GOTTA KNOW...

...WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON WITH YOU?



I HAD A SON.



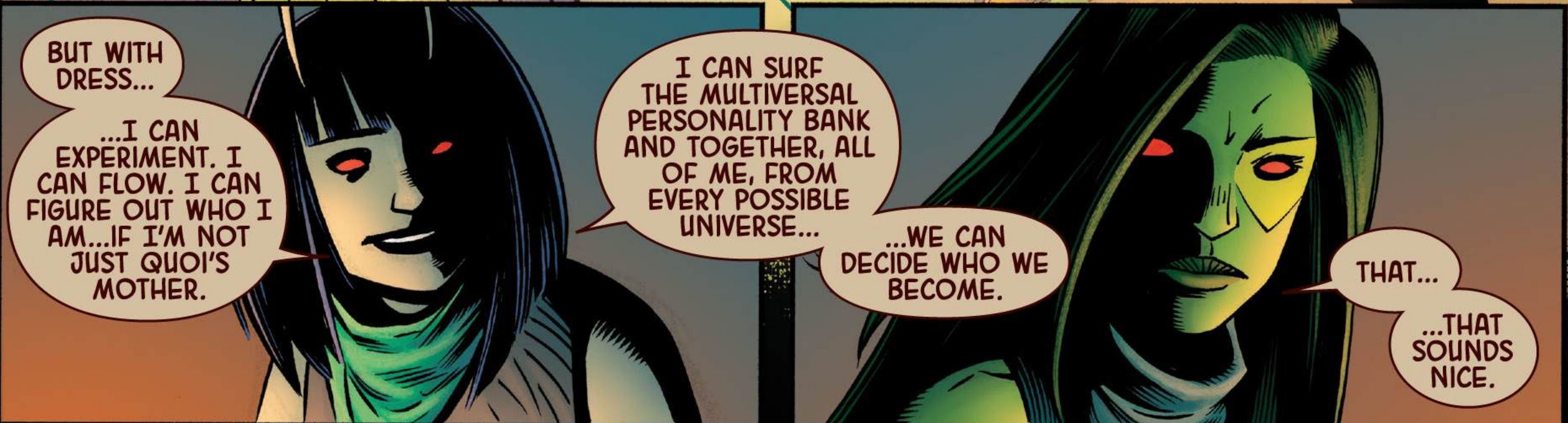
"SEQUOIA WAS SUPPOSED TO BE THE CELESTIAL MESSIAH. HE WAS THE ENTIRE REASON I EXISTED. HE MADE ME AS MUCH AS I MADE HIM.

"AND THEN... HE TURNED OUT TO SUCK.*

"MY TRAUMA, MY PAIN. IT WASN'T GROOT WHO CAUSED IT.

"I CAME SHATTERED, RIGHT OUT OF THE BOX."

*SEE *EMPYRE!* --DS



BUT WITH DRESS...

...I CAN EXPERIMENT. I CAN FLOW. I CAN FIGURE OUT WHO I AM...IF I'M NOT JUST QUOI'S MOTHER.

I CAN SURF THE MULTIVERSAL PERSONALITY BANK AND TOGETHER, ALL OF ME, FROM EVERY POSSIBLE UNIVERSE...

...WE CAN DECIDE WHO WE BECOME.

THAT...

...THAT SOUNDS NICE.



YEAH.

IT KINDA IS.

IT'S LIKE I'M BEING MADE WHOLE FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME...

"...AND DRAX
DESERVES
THE SAME."



SALVAGED
STEEL AND
PAINTED
STONE.

IT'S QUITE
LOVELY.

THIS IS THE
WORK OF SOMEONE
WHO'S LOST. THIS MULTITUDE...
HE MIGHT BE A KID, BUT
HE'S ALSO, YOU KNOW...AN
INFINITY STONE.

SOME THINGS
ARE BRIGHTLY
COLORED BECAUSE
YOU'RE SUPPOSED
TO STAY AWAY.





YES,
TRAVELERS.

I AM
DEFINITELY
ONE OF THOSE
THINGS.







FOR EVERY
SOUL IN THE
STONE FIGHTS
FOR ME!

THE...
MYSTERIUM...!

IT CAN
ABSORB...
INFINITE...ENERGY!
YOU HAVE TO...
USE IT!

NO
I HAVE A
PLAN!

OH, YOU ARE
INFURIATING!

WHY CAN'T
YOU JUST KILL
THINGS LIKE A
NORMAL
PERSON?!

SORRY, KID,
IT'S NOTHING
PERSONAL.

GAMORA.
CHILD OF
DEATH. OF
COURSE
IT IS.
AFTER
ALL...



...YOUR
SOUL IS
FOREVER
MINE.

HOW MANY
SOULS ARE IN
THERE?!

I CONTAIN
MULTITUDES.

AND ALL
WITH A SOUL
SERVE THE
STONE.

DO YOU
UNDERSTAND,
YOU LOST AND
SCATTERED
MORTAL
THING?

THERE ARE
MORE OF ME
THAN YOU CAN
COMPREHEND.

YEAH?



NOT

AS

MANY

AS

THERE

ARE

OF

ME!

YOU WANT
SYNTHESIS?
EAT
YOUR HEART
OUT.

MANTIS



WHAT DO YOU SAY, KID?

I KIND OF LIKE HER.

THEY'RE NOT AFTER THE STONE. THEY'RE AFTER ME.

JAZZ MAN. I DID NOT CALL UPON YOU.



THAT'S ARTHUR DOUGLAS.

THAT'S DRAX.

HOLY SPLOPT.

WHAT DID YOU THINK WE WERE DOING HERE?



YOU DON'T NEED ME ANYMORE. HE DOES.

LET ME GO.



...



I'M NOT SURE IF I CAN.

ONE OF THE BEST THINGS ABOUT BEING SO MANY PEOPLE?

EVEN WHEN YOU LET SOME GO, YOU'RE STILL ONE HUNDRED PERCENT YOURSELF.



GOOD LUCK.

OH \$#@&. I ALMOST FORGOT.

WE'RE NOT DONE.

I HEAR YOU'VE BEEN TRYING TO FIND YOURSELF. UNDERSTAND YOUR HUMANITY...

...EVEN THOUGH YOU'RE NOT STRICTLY HUMAN AND DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING.

I CAN RELATE LIKE WOW.

BUT YOU SHOULD DEFINITELY **NOT** RELY ON AN INFINITY STONE--THAT NEVER WORKS OUT WELL FOR **ANYONE**.

THERE'S A LOT YOU CAN DO WITH MEDITATION AND STUFF--BUT EVENTUALLY...

...YOU'RE GONNA NEED MONEY.

AND THAT'S BASICALLY INFINITE MONEY.

UH...

...THANKS?

MANTIS, WHAT THE FLORK?

THAT WAS LIKE **EIGHTEEN GIGASOL** OF MYSTERIUM! WE ALMOST DIED TRYING TO GET IT IN THE FIRST PLACE!

YEAH. BUT WE DIDN'T. AND THEN WE NEVER USED IT FOR ANYTHING.

IT'S
ALMOST
LIKE IT WASN'T
WHAT WE
NEEDED AT
ALL.





SONGS WERE SUNG THROUGH THE COSMOS THAT DAY, THOUGH THERE WERE ONLY TWO TO HEAR THEM.



THEY SAY MANTIS SHARED CHANTS SHE'D LEARNED AT THE TEMPLE AT TRẦN QUỐC...

...WHILE GAMORA SANG THE ONLY ONE SHE KNEW.



A SINGLE LULLABY SUNG BY A WOMAN LONG DEAD...WHO HAD CALLED HER DAUGHTER.



SHE SWORE MANTIS TO NEVER SPEAK OF IT.



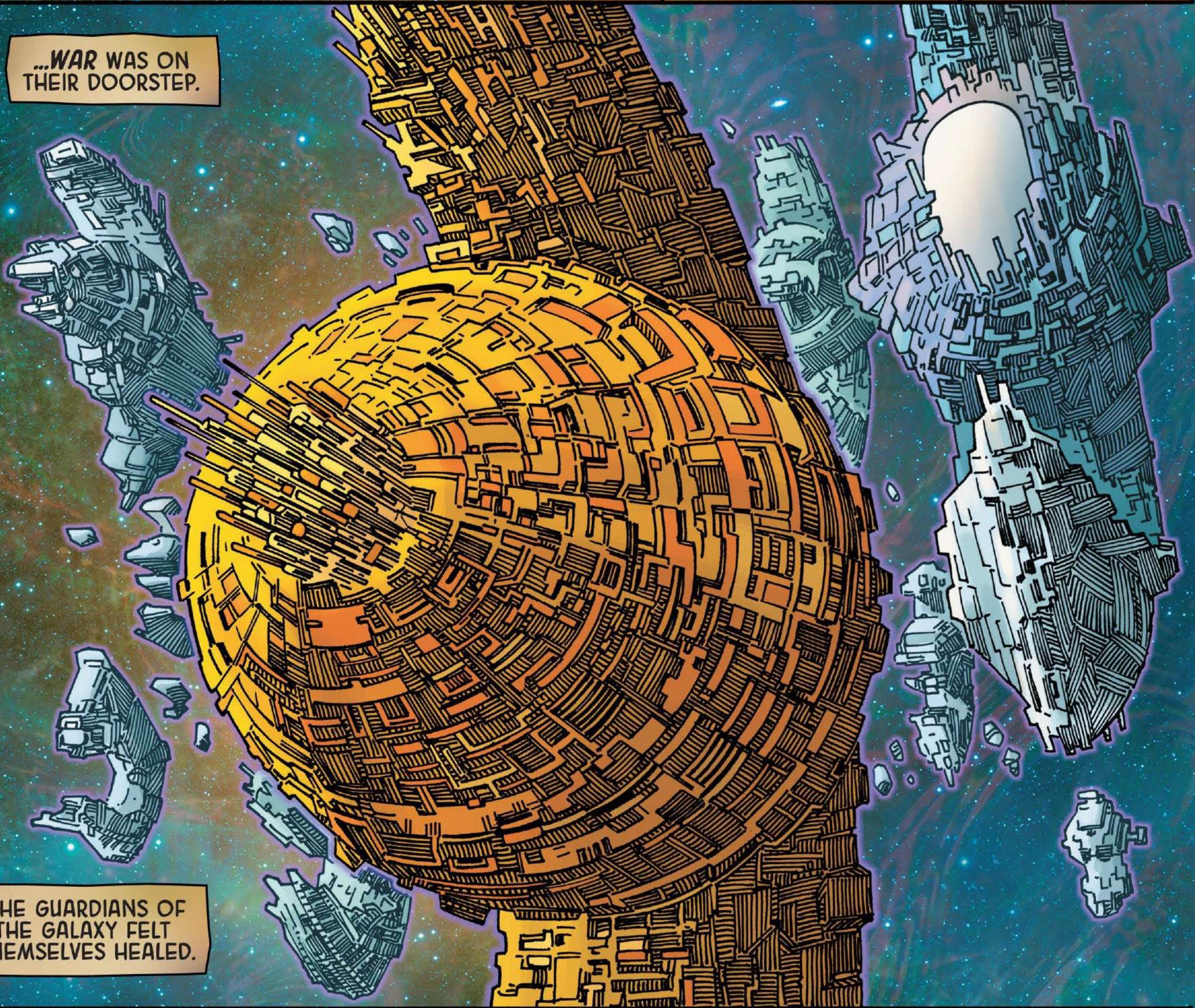
SO IT WAS FROM *HER* THAT I HEARD THE STORY.



IN THOSE DAYS LONG AFTER THE SCREAMS HAD FADED.



FOR THOUGH
THERE WAS *PEACE*
IN THEIR *HEARTS*...



...*WAR* WAS ON
THEIR DOORSTEP.

THE GUARDIANS OF
THE GALAXY FELT
THEMSELVES HEALED.



THEY FELT SO
CLOSE TO GLORY...

...BUT WHAT
THEY WERE
WAS A...



FIRE!





10

"THE GUNS OF HOME"

I'LL TELL YOU
THE STORY AS IT
WAS TOLD TO ME...



ONCE UPON A TIME,
THE GUARDIANS
OF THE GALAXY
LOST EVERYTHING.

ONLY TO LEARN THAT IN ALL
THE PAIN AND THE DEATH
AND THE RUNNING AND THE
DRINKING TO NUMB IT ALL...

...IT WAS
THEMSELVES
THAT HAD
BEEN LOST.



AND SO
THEY MADE
A **HOME**.

AND LIKE ANY GOOD
HOME, THEY FILLED IT
WITH LOVE. WITH
PLANS FOR THE FUTURE.
WITH MEANING.



THEY GAVE
THEMSELVES THE
GIFT OF HOPE.

THE PROMISE
OF BETTER DAYS.



BUT WHAT
THEY GAVE
THEMSELVES
MOST OF ALL...





...WAS SOMETHING
MORE TO *LOSE*.

HEYA,
DRAX.

WE GOT YOU
SOMETHING.



HOPE
YOU DON'T
HAVE ONE
ALREADY.



THIS...THIS
IS THE SOUL
OF ARTHUR
DOUGLAS.

NOT
JUST *HIS*.
YOURS.

HOW DID
YOU...?

MANTIS BEAT
UP A ROBOT KID.
I HELPED. IT
WAS NUTS.



I...

...I HAVE
IMAGINED THIS
DAY FOR A VERY
LONG TIME.

FINALLY, I
CLAIM WHAT
I HAVE LOST
AND MASTER
MY STOLEN
SOUL.



I...

...WHY
ISN'T IT
WORKING?

IT'S OKAY,
DRAX. WE'LL
FIGURE OUT A
WAY TO CRACK
IT OPEN.

PETER'S
RIGHT. TOGETHER,
THERE'S NOTHING
WE CAN'T
ACCOMPLISH.

UNFORTUNATELY,
THAT LITTLE SCIENCE
PROJECT IS GONNA
HAVE TO WAIT.

AND I
GOTTA GET **THE
PROJECT** READY.
LOOKS LIKE HULKING'S
WARNING WASN'T AN
EXAGGERATION.

THE SPARTOI
HAVE ENTERED
GROOTSPACE...



"...AND THEY'RE
LETTIN' THEIR GUNS
DO THE TALKIN'."





OKAY, GUARDIANS.

WE'RE OFFICIALLY OPERATIONAL. PLAN'S SET, NO TIME TO WASTE.

CHECK IN.

MANTIS. KINDA EXCITED TO PUNCH SOME STUFF ACTUALLY. GO FOR LAUNCH.

DRAX. TRYING TO FOCUS ON THE MISSION, BUT I AM DISTRACTED BY MY UNCOOPERATIVE SOUL.

DRAX, YOU GOTTA SAY "GO FOR LAUNCH."

BUT I AM STILL PUTTING ON MY MASK.

ROCKET. SHE'S DONE, AND SHE'S BEAUTIFUL. NOW WE JUST GOTTA HOPE SHE WORKS.

GO FOR LAUNCH.

GAMORA. PREPARING FOR TACTICAL INSERTION. GO FOR LAUNCH.

ALSO, I LOVE YOU GUYS.

NEBULA. TARGET COORDINATES ARE LOCATED. EYE IS GIVING US A 32 PERCENT CHANCE OF SUCCESS. GO FOR LAUNCH.

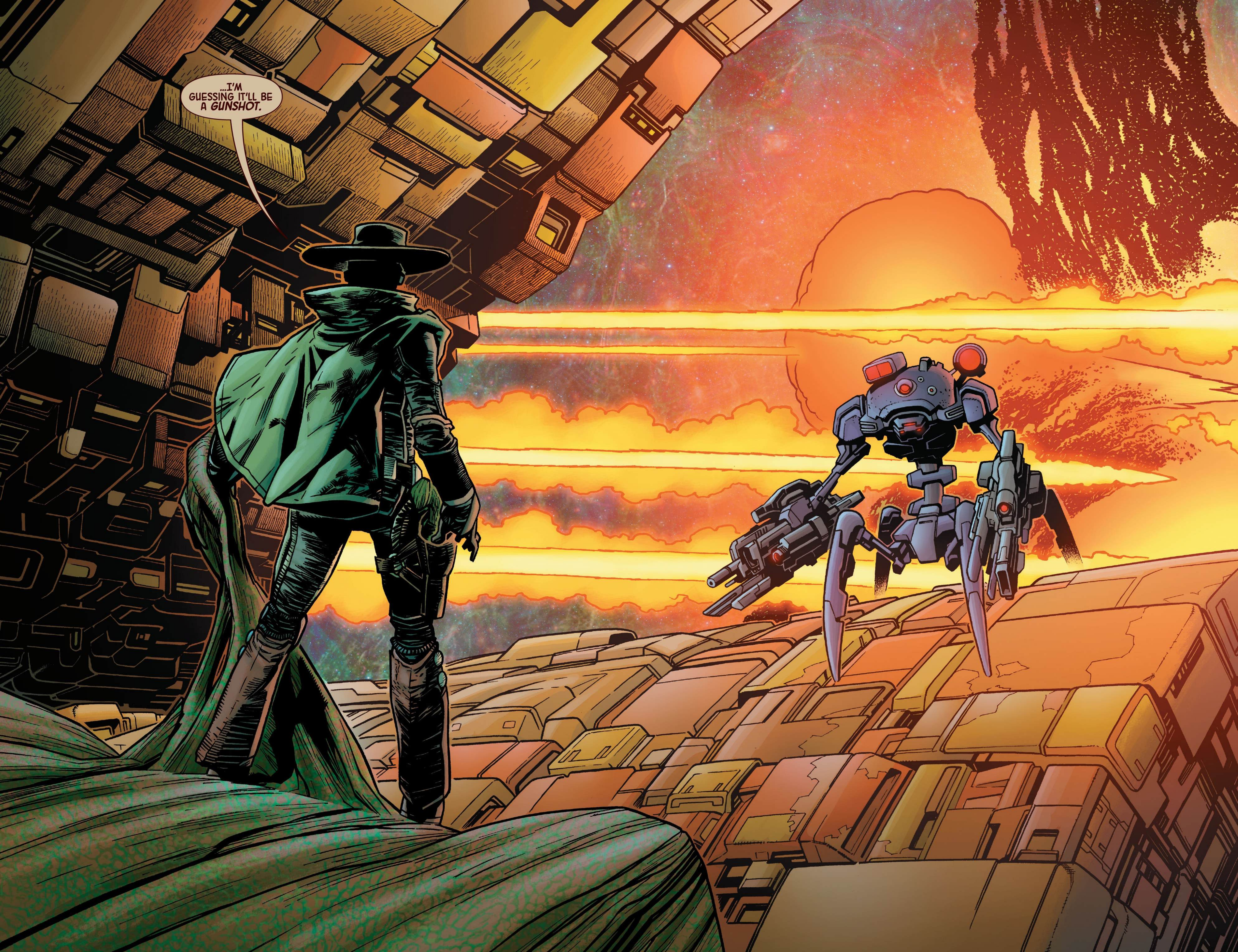
AND I ALSO LOVE YOU GUYS.

THEN LET'S STICK TO THE PLAN AND MAKE SURE WE ALL GET HOME. WAIT FOR MY SIGNAL, THEN WE GO UNTIL THE FIGHT'S FINISHED.

OH YEAH? AND WHAT'S THE SIGNAL EXACTLY, OH MIGHTY STAR-LORD?

OH, KNOWING ME...

...I'M
GUESSING IT'LL BE
A GUNSHOT.





PETER...OR
WHATEVER'S LEFT
OF HIM INSIDE
THAT WOODEN
ABOMINATION...

...YOU ARE
HEREBY STRIPPED
OF YOUR RANK AS
STAR-LORD AND YOUR
CROWN AS HIGH
PRINCE.

TODAY,
SPARTAX CLEANSSES
THE GALAXY OF THE
HORROR OF
GROOTFALL.



VICTORIA.
PLEASE. I'M
SORRY ABOUT THE
GREAT HUNT. THAT
WAS...IMPULSIVE.*

BUT I'M
STILL YOUR
BROTHER. WE
CAN TALK
THIS OUT.

CAPTAIN
KRAKEEN CARES
TO DISAGREE.

*SEE ISSUE 3! --DS



YOU OWE ME MORE
THAN I CAN EVER SAY,
QUILL. I'LL BE IN THIS
METAL MONSTROSITY TILL
THE DAY I DIE, JUST
TO KEEP BREATHIN'.
THAT'S ON YOU.

SO YOUR
DEATH'LL BE
ON ME.

AS YOU SEE,
I DOUBT VERY
MUCH THERE'S ANY
PATH FORWARD
BUT WAR.



WELL.

I
HAD TO
TRY.



GOODBYE,
PETER.





RANK

GUARDIANS!
WE'RE A GO!

GO GO
GO GO
GO!

TEAM
VERY LOUD
DISTRACTION
IS IN THE
FIELD!

YOUR
WRETCHED
SISTER BROUGHT
MANY SPARTOI
STARSHIPS,
PETER
QUILL...



...IT
WILL BE
A PLEASURE
TO DESTROY
THEM.

DISTRACTION
ACTIVE!

AND DRAX
IS STILL MOSTLY
ON MISSION!

OVER
TO YOU,
GAMORA!

TEAM
UNSTOPPABLE
IS INSIDE THE
BEAST!

WE'RE
THROUGH THE
OUTER LEVELS AND
ARE--KAPOW--
CLOSING IN ON
THE TARGET!

DID YOU
JUST SAY
YOUR KAPOW
OUT LOUD?

WHATEVER,
I'M TRYING
STUFF. LAY
OFF.

THE SPARTOI
FLAGSHIP SOLAR
ENGINE.

IT'D BE
BEAUTIFUL IF IT
WASN'T BEING WIELDED
BY A COMPLETE
PIECE OF \$#%&.

WORK
FAST AND WORK
CLEAN!

PROBABILITY
OF ME DOING
ANYTHING ELSE:
ZERO
PERCENT.

ALERT
CODE PISCES.
ENGINEERING
SECURITY
COMPROMISED.

ALERT CODE
SCORPIO. SOLAR
CORE INSTABILITY
DETECTED.

KAPOW.

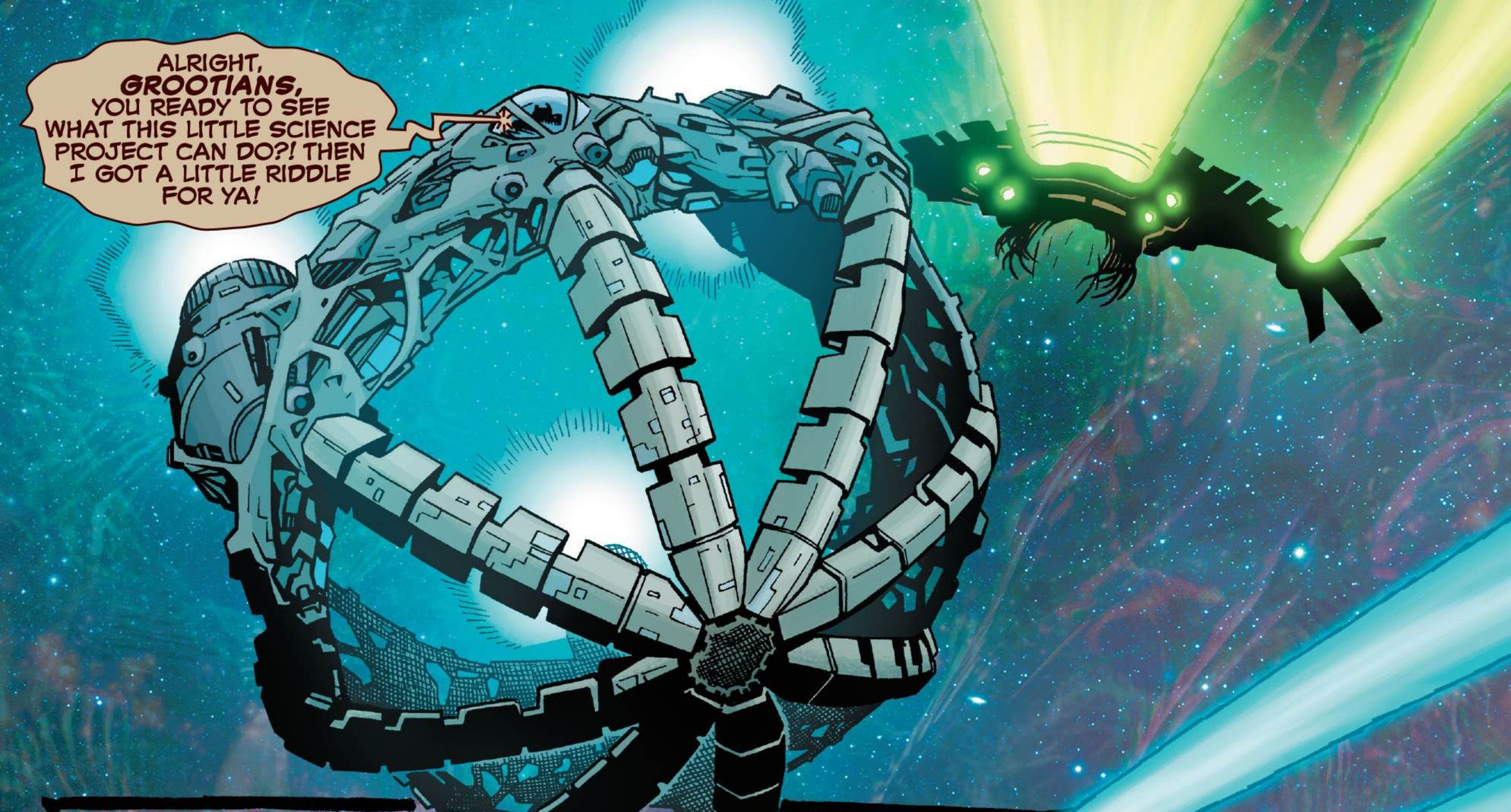
HEY,
ACTUALLY,
THAT IS PRETTY
FUN.

ALERT CODE
ARES. SOLAR
CORE INSTABILITY
CRITICAL.

SOLAR CORE
EJECTION IN
THREE--TWO--

WELL.
BYE.





ALRIGHT, **GROOTIANS**,
YOU READY TO SEE
WHAT THIS LITTLE SCIENCE
PROJECT CAN DO?! THEN
I GOT A LITTLE RIDDLE
FOR YA!

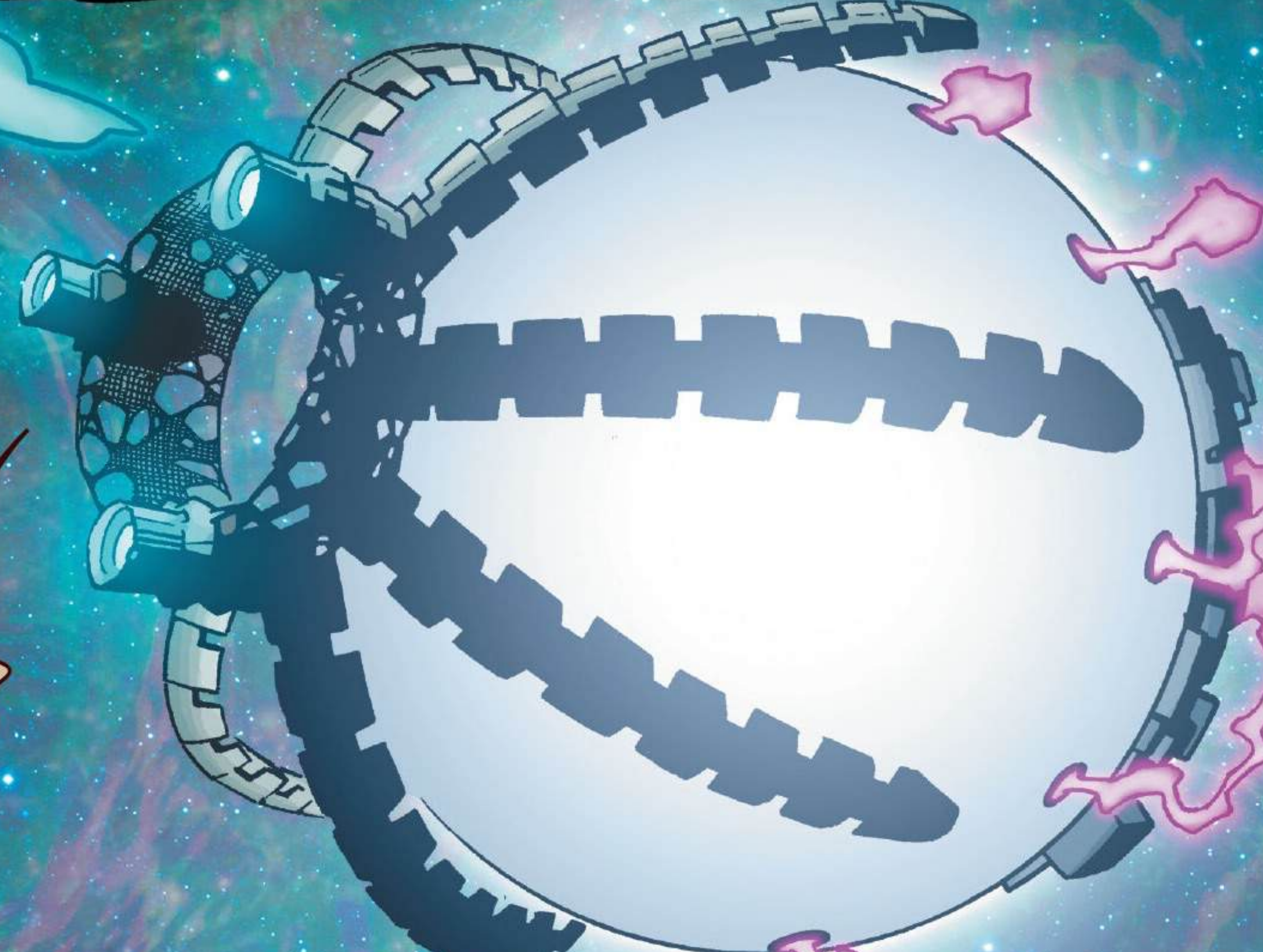


WHEN
IS A FORTY-
QUADRILLION-
WATT FUSION
ENGINE...

...**NOT**
A FORTY-
QUADRILLION-
WATT FUSION
ENGINE?



WHEN
YOU'RE A VERY
CLEVER, VERY PISSED-
OFF RACCOON WHO'S
BUILT THE UNIVERSE'S
FIRST **SOLAR-
INJECTION**
RIG...



...AND STARTED
TURNIN' IT INTO A
POCKET SUN.



THE ARCANA
HAVE SPOKEN.
OUR VICTORY IS
ASSURED.

WE CANNOT
FAIL IN THIS. WE
ARE THE GALAXY'S
LAST REMAINING
GUARDIANS.

EMPRESS,
WITHOUT THE
POWER CORE...OUR
TRACTOR BEAM IS
USELESS.

AND HE'S
ALREADY OUTSIDE
OUR GRAPPLE
RANGE.

THEN WE
FIRE!!!

GIVE ME EVERY
TORPEDO! EVERY
STELLAR WAVE BLASTER!
EVERY SUNSPOT
INDUCER!

OPEN EVERY
DAMN GUN ON
THIS SHIP...



...AND
ANNIHILATE HIM
FROM EXISTENCE!

BUT, MY
EMPRESS...WE COULD
HIT THE CORE. WITHOUT ITS
STABILITY HOUSING, THE
DETONATION WOULD
BE, UH...



...100 BILLION
MEGATONS.

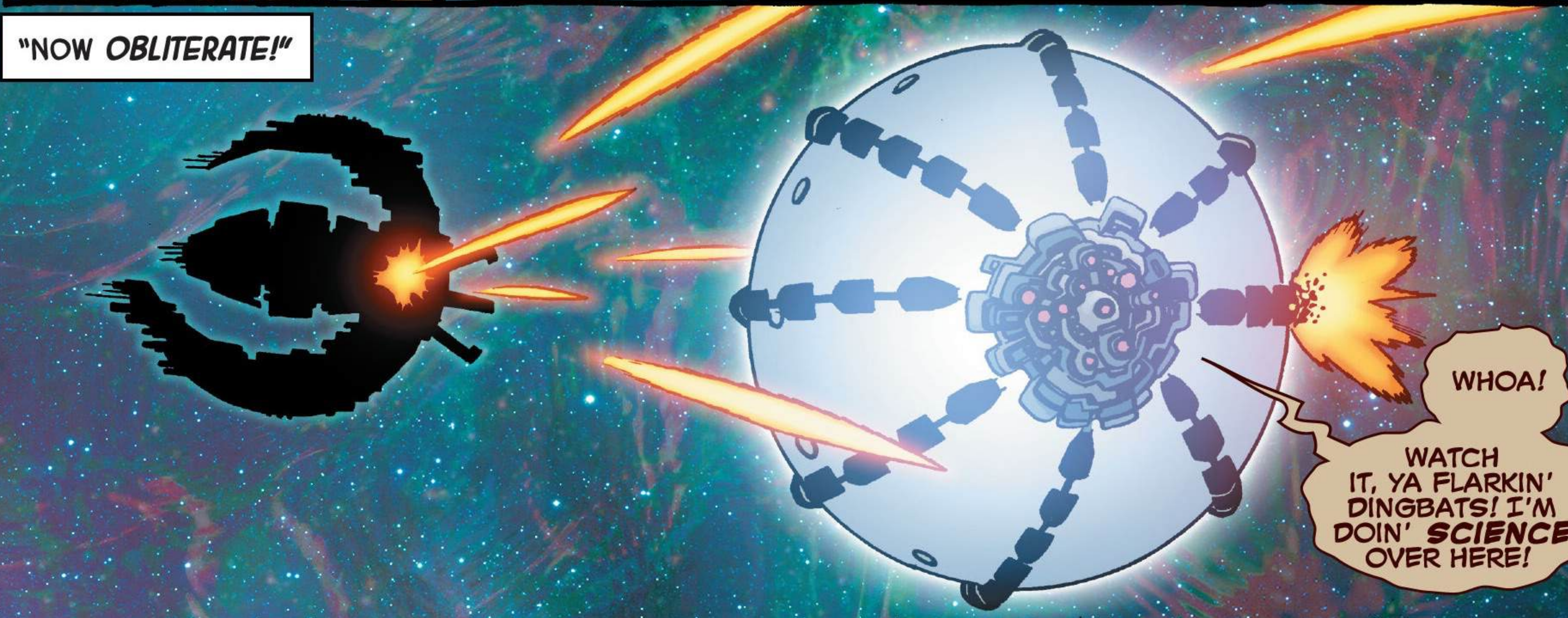
WILL
OUR SHIELDS
HOLD?

YES. BUT
THE REST OF THE
ARMADA--

SHALL BE
HONORED AS
LEGENDS.



"NOW OBLITERATE!"



WHOA!

WATCH
IT, YA FLARKIN'
DINGBATS! I'M
DOIN' **SCIENCE**
OVER HERE!



GAMORA,
COME ON! ESCAPE
PODS ARE THIS WAY.
LET'S JET.

SURE.
OR...NEW
PITCH: WE
END VICTORIA.
HERE AND
NOW.

SHE CHOSE
THIS VENDETTA,
NEBULA. SHE PUT ALL
OF THESE PEOPLE IN
DANGER. SHE COULD
HAVE LEFT ALL OF THIS
ALONE, AND INSTEAD,
SHE CHOSE
WAR.



REMINDE
YOU OF
ANYONE?



YEAH.
SHE DOES.

BUT
REMEMBER
WHAT WE LEARNED
AFTER ALL THOSE
YEARS FIGHTING
THANOS...

...IT'S NOT
JUST **MONSTERS**
THAT GET TO MAKE
CHOICES. YOU GET
ONE TOO.



YOU
CAN BE A
KNIFE...



...OR YOU
CAN BE A
GUARDIAN.



ROCKET?
HOW ARE WE
LOOKING?

WE'RE
LOOKIN', AH--
WHAT'S THE WORD
FOR WHEN LITERALLY
EVERYTHING'S ON FIRE
BUT NOT IN THE
GOOD WAY?



OH,
RIGHT--BAD.
WE'RE LOOKING
BAD, QUILL.

I'M STABILIZIN'
THIS MICRO-SUN
WITH EVERY TRICK I
KNOW, BUT IF I TAKE
MY EYE OFF THIS
THING FOR EVEN
A MINUTE...

...OR YOUR
CRUSADIN'
SISTER GETS
ENOUGH
SHOTS IN...

...THERE'S
NOT GONNA
BE ANY OF **ME**
TO PUT BACK
TOGETHER.



WHAT? I
THOUGHT THE IDEA
WAS TO TRIGGER IT
REMOTELY?!

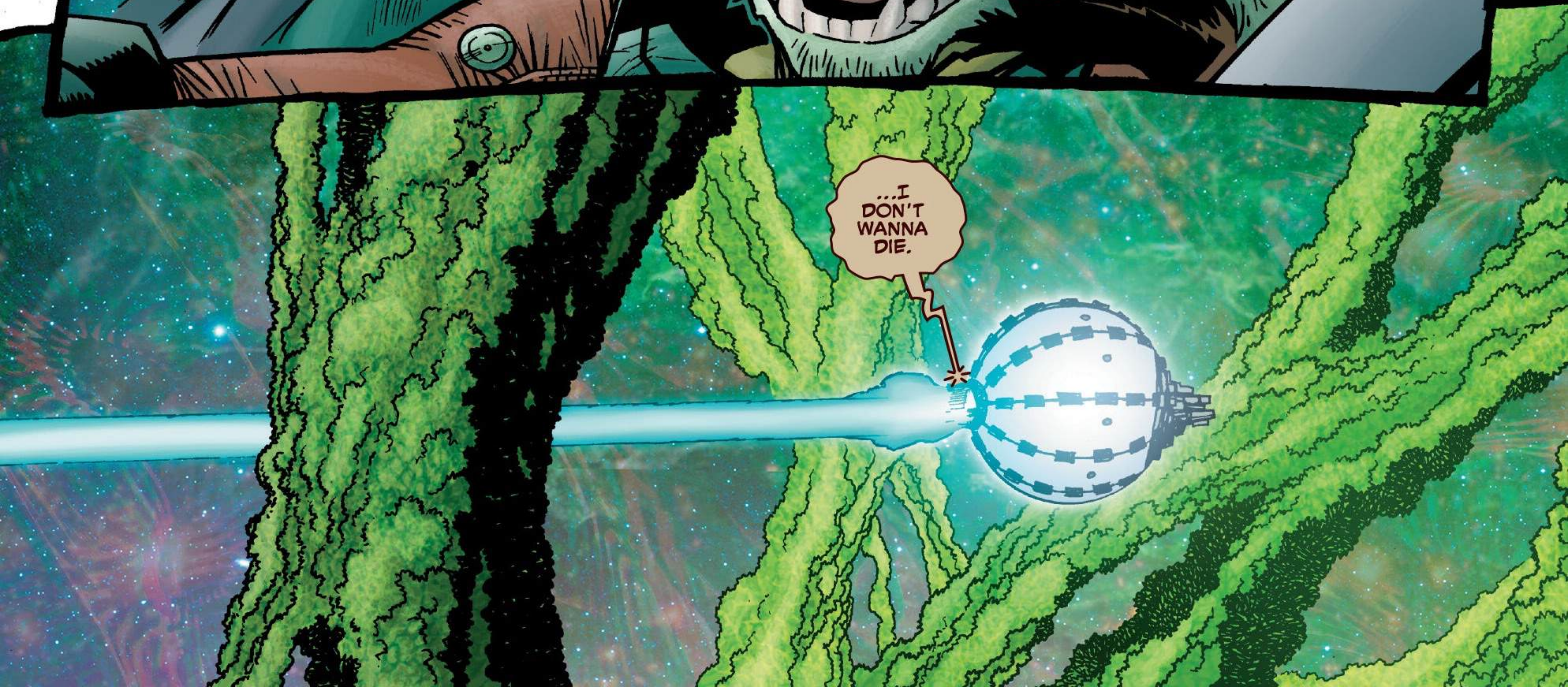
THAT WAS
BEFORE YOUR
SISTER DECIDED
SUPERNOVA-ING
THE ENTIRETY OF
GROOTSPACE WAS
AN ACCEPTABLE
COURSE OF
ACTION!



UNLESS
ONE OF YOU
GENIUSES
HAS ANOTHER
SOLVE, THIS
IS IT.

I MEAN,
ALWAYS KNEW
I'D GO OUT IN A
BIG OL' BALL OF FIRE.
KINDA FIGURED A
FEW OF YOU WOULD
GO OUT WITH
ME.

BUT NOW
THAT WE'RE
HERE, I GOTTA
BE HONEST,
QUILL...



...I
DON'T WANNA
DIE.



AND YOU WILL NOT, MY FRAGILE FURRY FRIEND.

DRAX?! I WASN'T TALKIN' TA YOU!

I HAVE BECOME EXCEEDINGLY GOOD AT LISTENING.

MANTIS. THIS SPACESHIP FIGHT IS NOW IN YOUR CAPABLE HANDS.

EXCUSE ME? NO OFFENSE, BUT NOW IS A LESS THAN IDEAL TIME TO STOP SMASHING.

IF THE RACCOON FAILS, WE NEVER LEAVE THE DARKNESS.

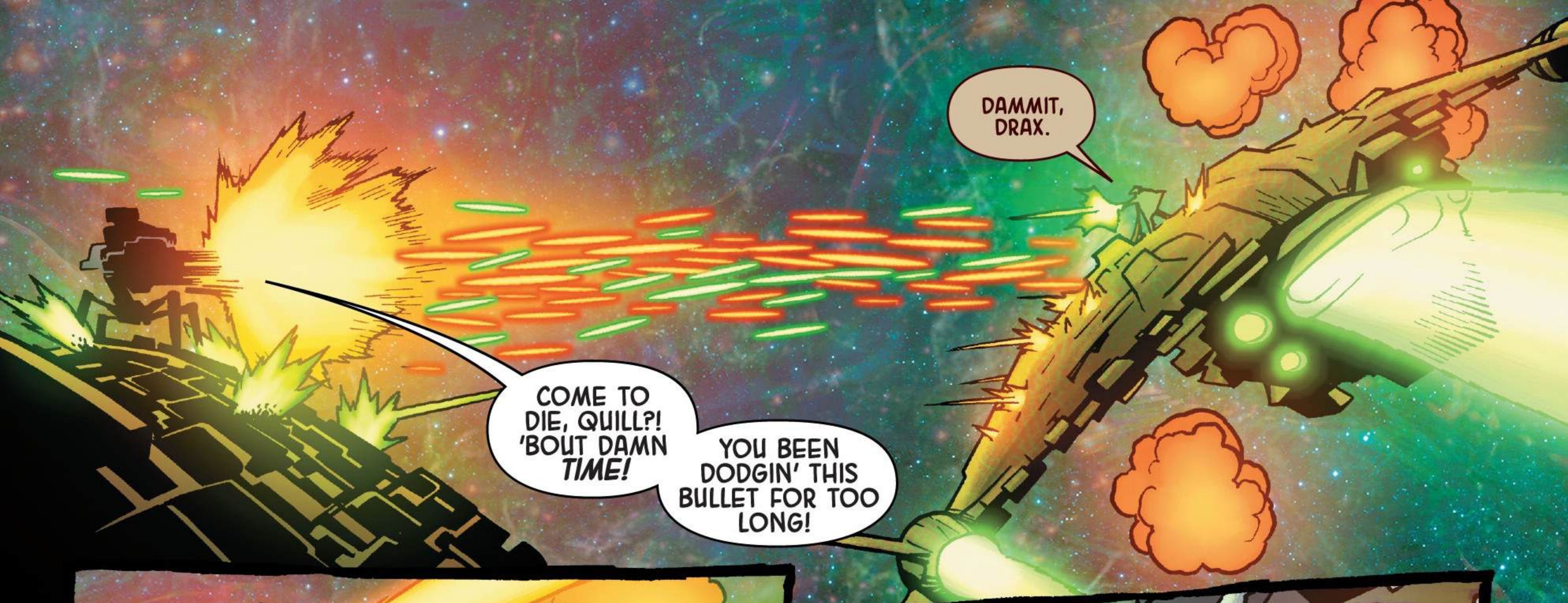
"FOR GROOT TO BLOOM...HE NEEDS THE SUN."

SO IT IS MY TURN TO SHINE.

WELL, WOULD YOU LOOK AT THAT? YOU'RE IMPROVISING.

YES.

I AM DONE RUNNING FROM THE JAZZ.



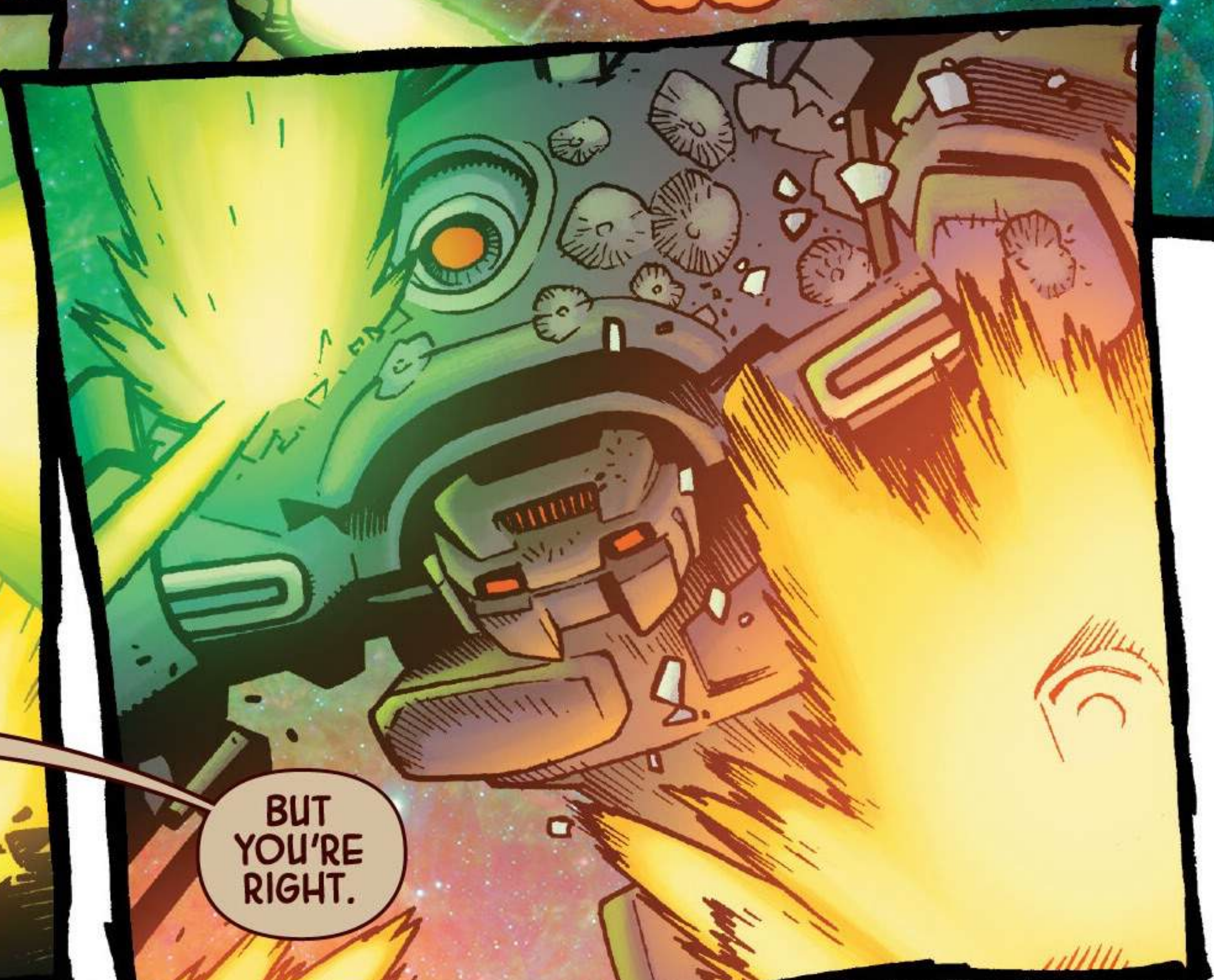
DAMMIT,
DRAX.

COME TO
DIE, QUILL?!
'BOUT DAMN
TIME!

YOU BEEN
DODGIN' THIS
BULLET FOR TOO
LONG!



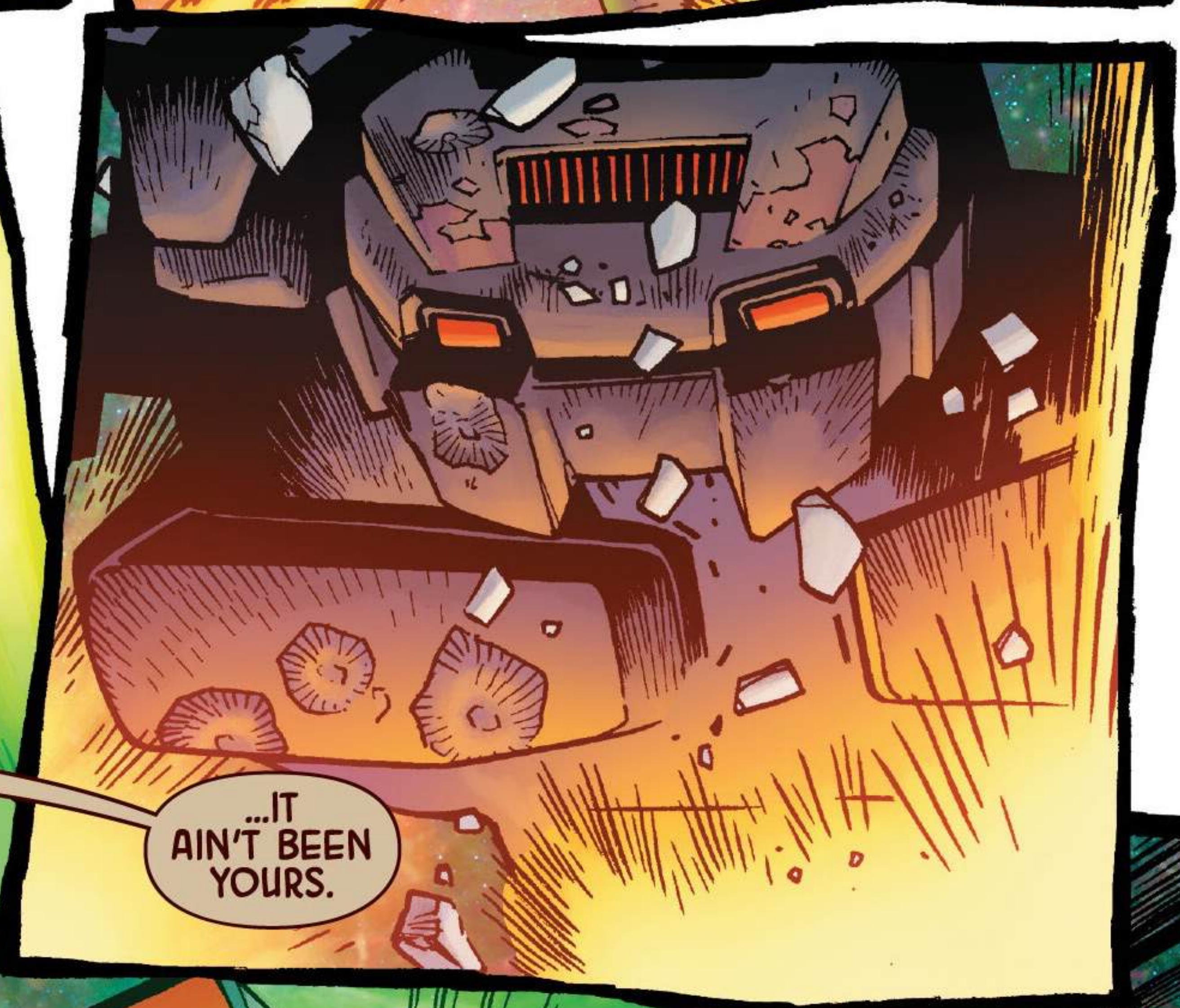
YOU TALK
TOO MUCH,
KRAKEEN.



BUT
YOU'RE
RIGHT.



'CEPT THE
BULLET I'M
DODGIN'...



...IT
AIN'T BEEN
YOURS.





LISTEN UP,
EVERYONE. GET THE
SUN FIRING. DO WHAT
WE CAME HERE TO DO.
BUT I'M GOIN'
ROGUE.

MY
SISTER'S THE
PROBLEM...



...AND I'M THE
SOLUTION.



BROTHER.

HEY, VIC.
BILL ME FOR THE
WINDOW.



YOU'LL
PAY WITH YOUR
LIFE.

SEE, I'M
THINKING WE DO
THIS THE OTHER
WAY 'ROUND.



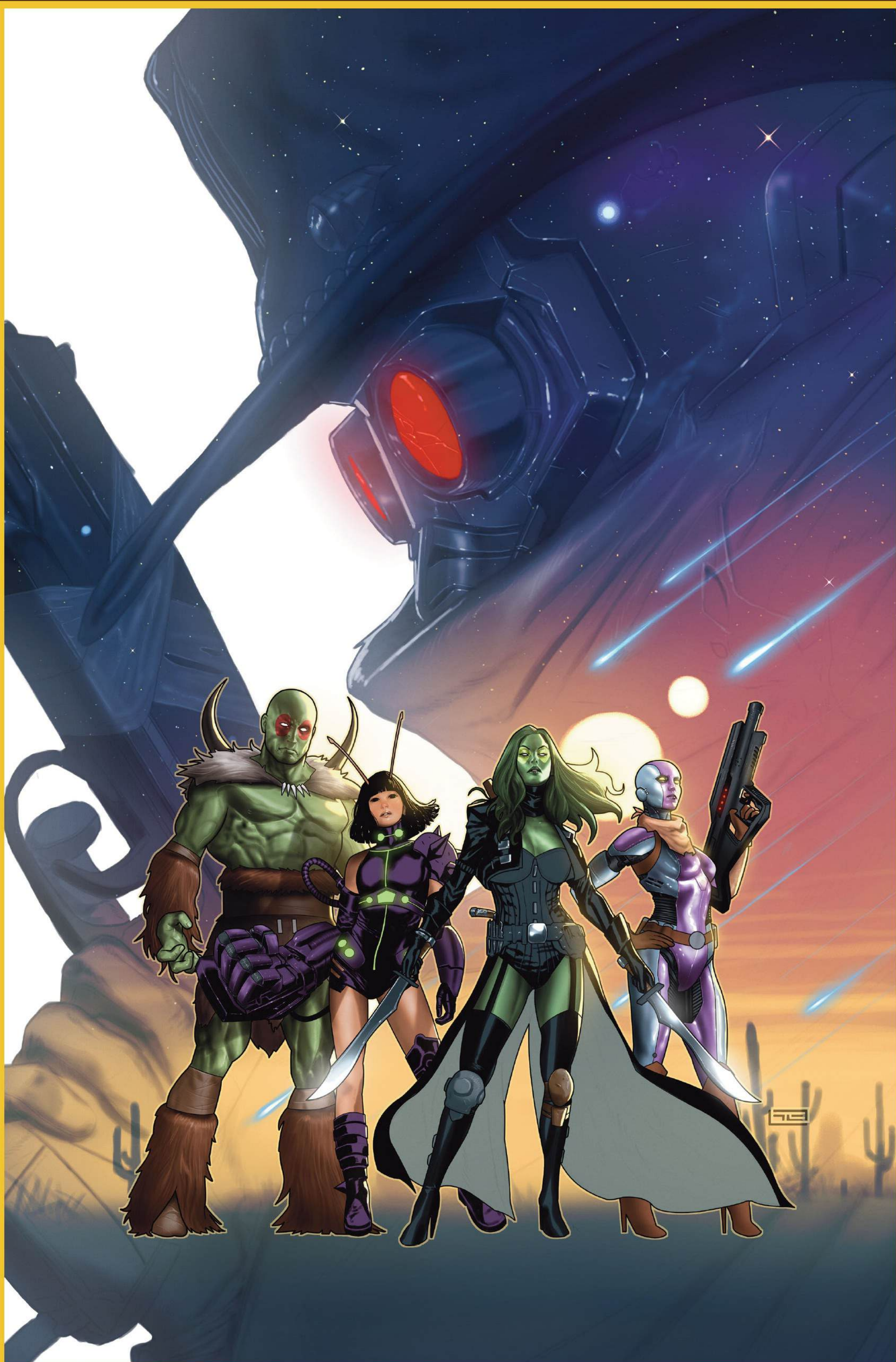
OH?

YOU'VE
COME TO BEG
FOR THE LIVES OF
YOUR INSIPID
FRIENDS?

NO. I'VE
COME TO
FINALLY TAKE
WHAT'S MINE.

AND WHAT
YOU'VE PROVEN
YOU DON'T
DESERVE.

I'VE
COME
FOR THE
THRONE.





ANNUAL

"GROOTRISE"



THE SKIES TURNED
PURPLE, LIKE A
RISING BRUISE.



NIGHT COMES
TO ITS END. AND
WITH IT, OUR TIME.



BUT BEFORE
WE BREAK CAMP.



BEFORE
WE WALK INTO
OUR DAY.

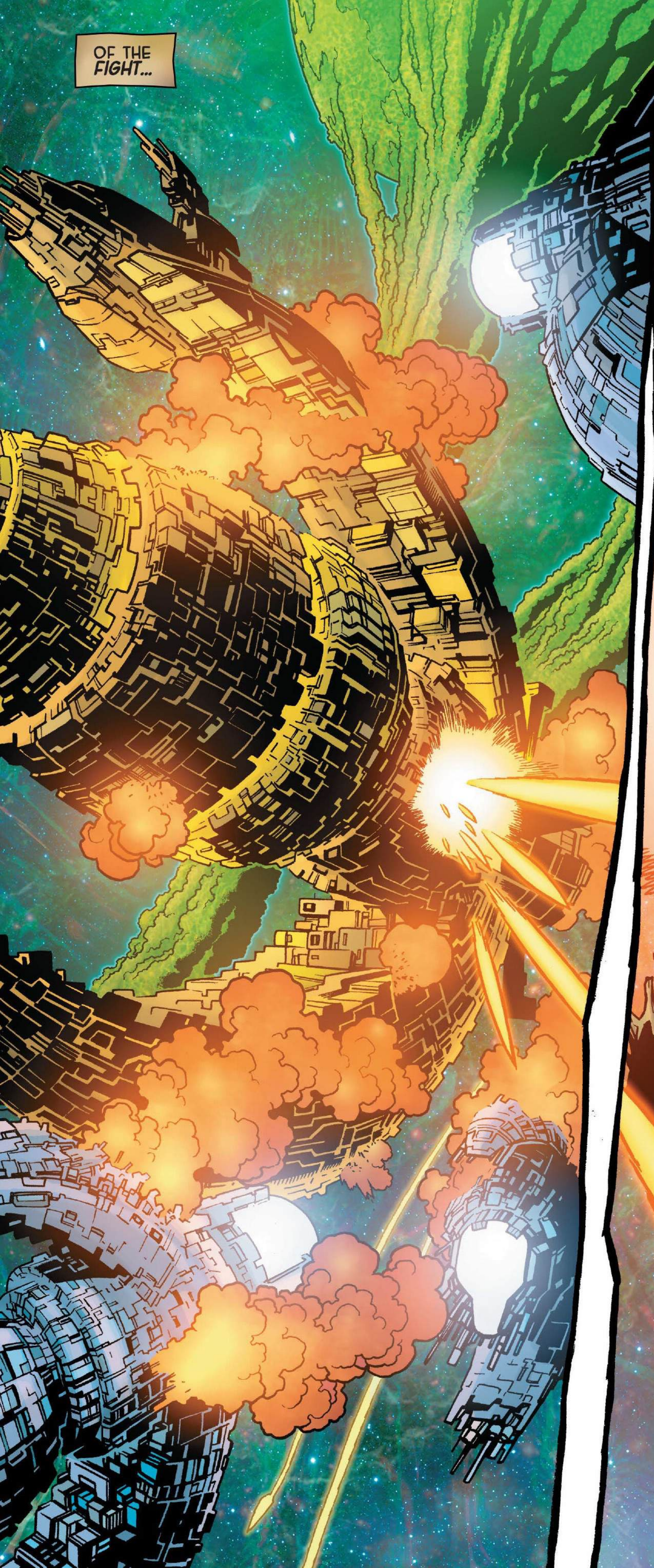


LEAN YE
CLOSE AND
LISTEN WELL...

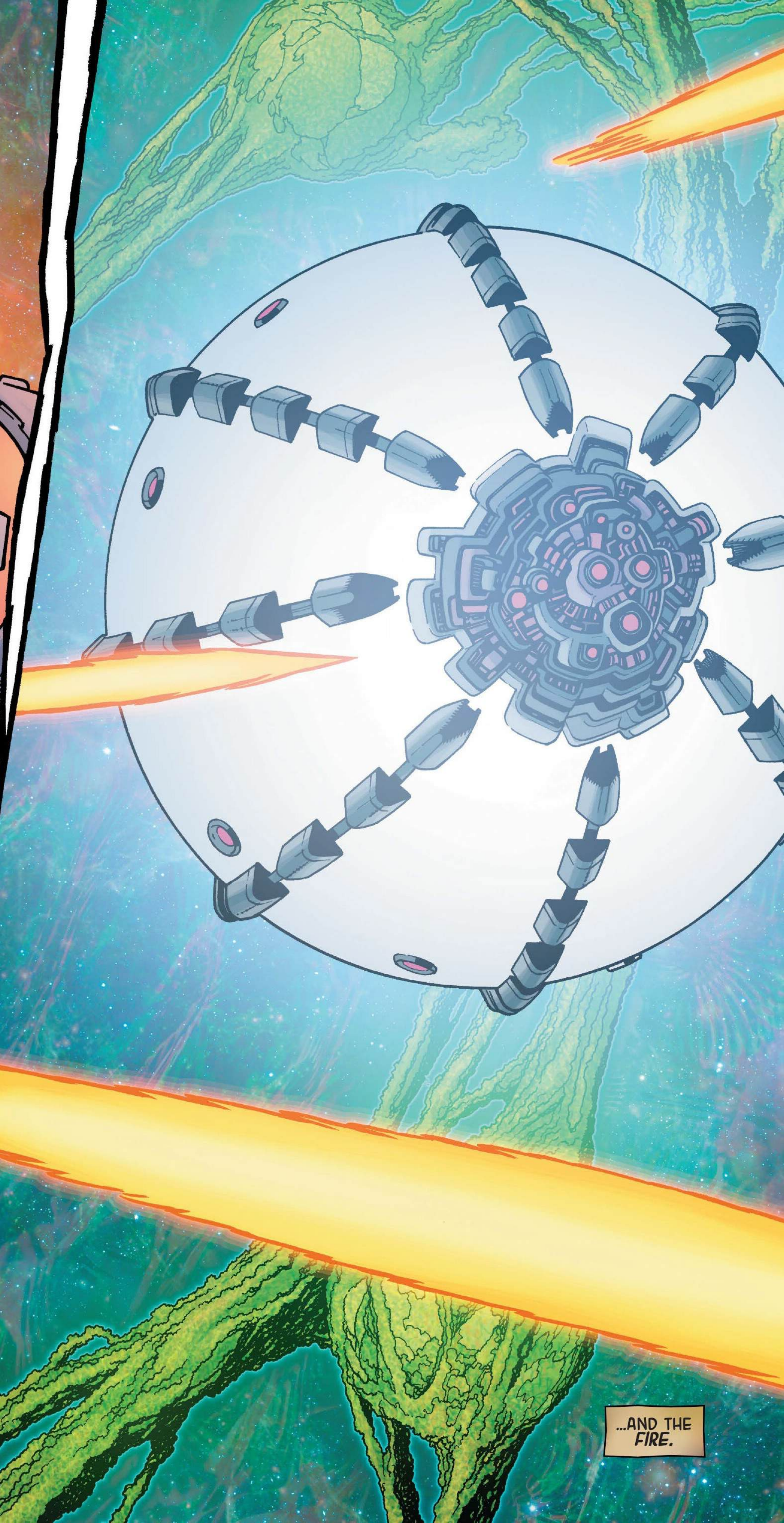
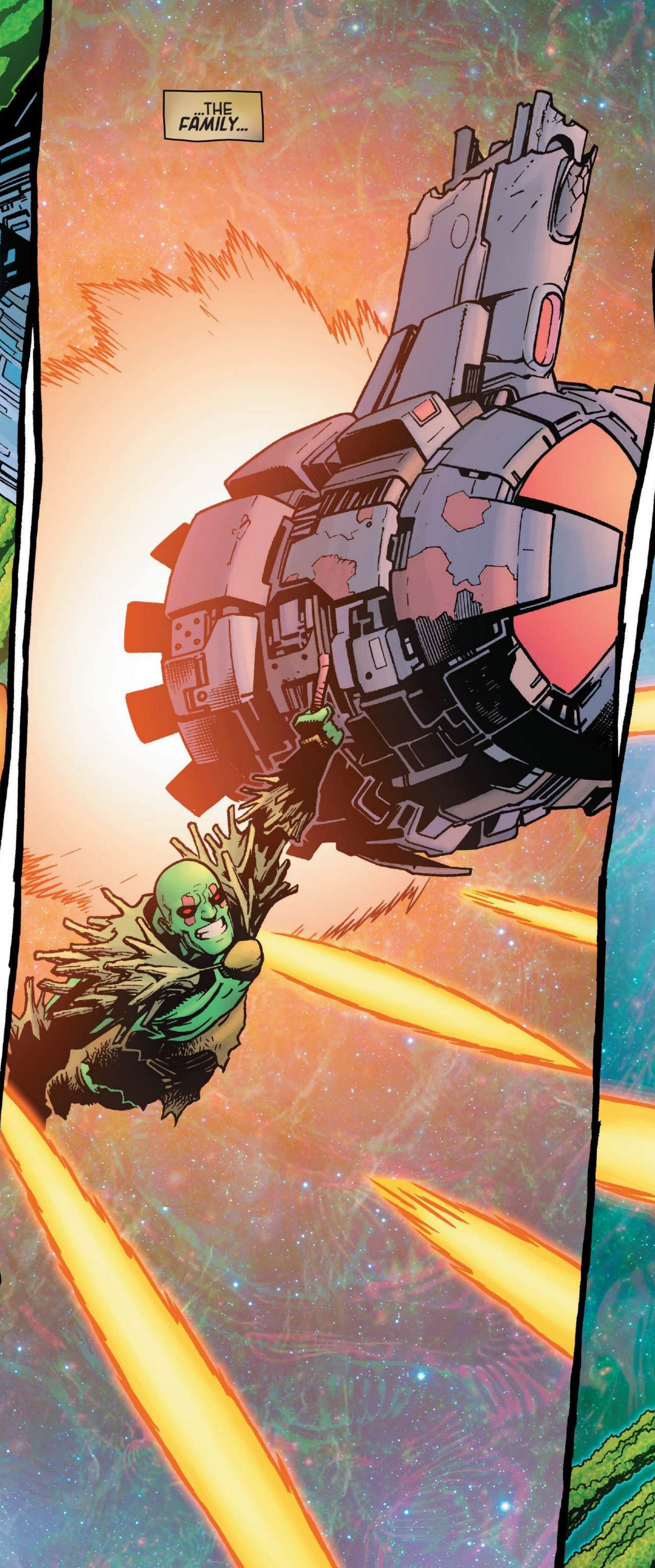


...TO OUR
STORY'S FINAL
VERSE.

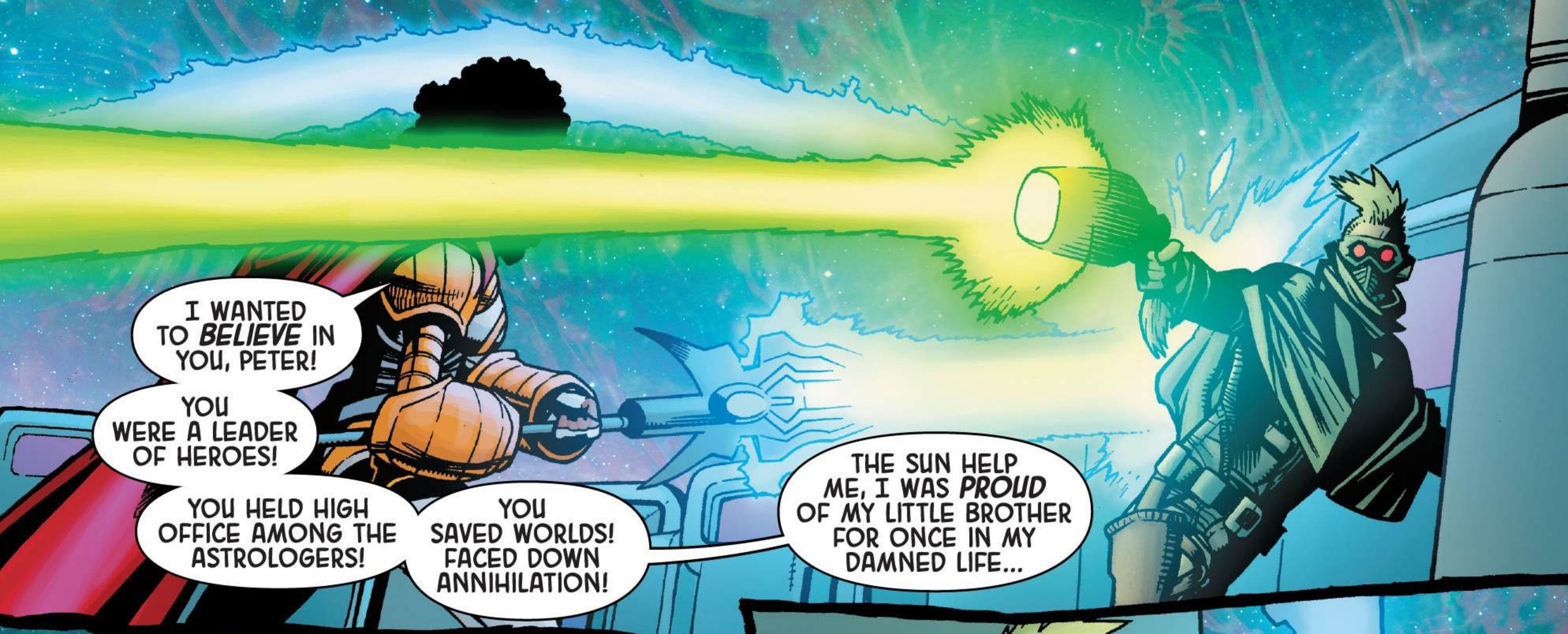
OF THE
FIGHT...



...THE
FAMILY...



...AND THE
FIRE.



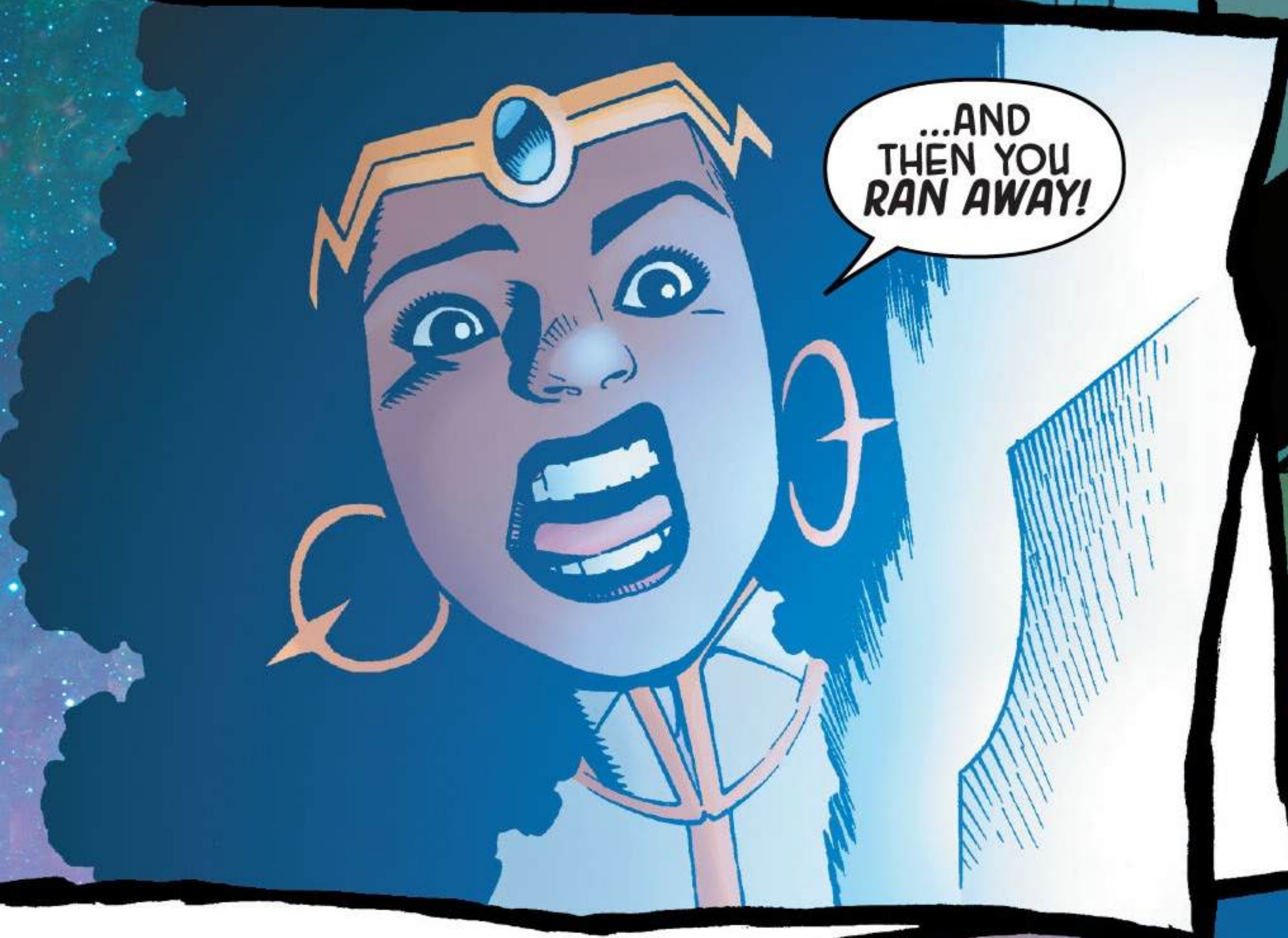
I WANTED
TO **BELIEVE** IN
YOU, PETER!

YOU
WERE A LEADER
OF HEROES!

YOU HELD HIGH
OFFICE AMONG THE
ASTROLOGERS!

YOU
SAVED WORLDS!
FACED DOWN
ANNIHILATION!

THE SUN HELP
ME, I WAS **PROUD**
OF MY LITTLE BROTHER
FOR ONCE IN MY
DAMNED LIFE...



...AND
THEN YOU
RAN AWAY!



NOT
AWAY.

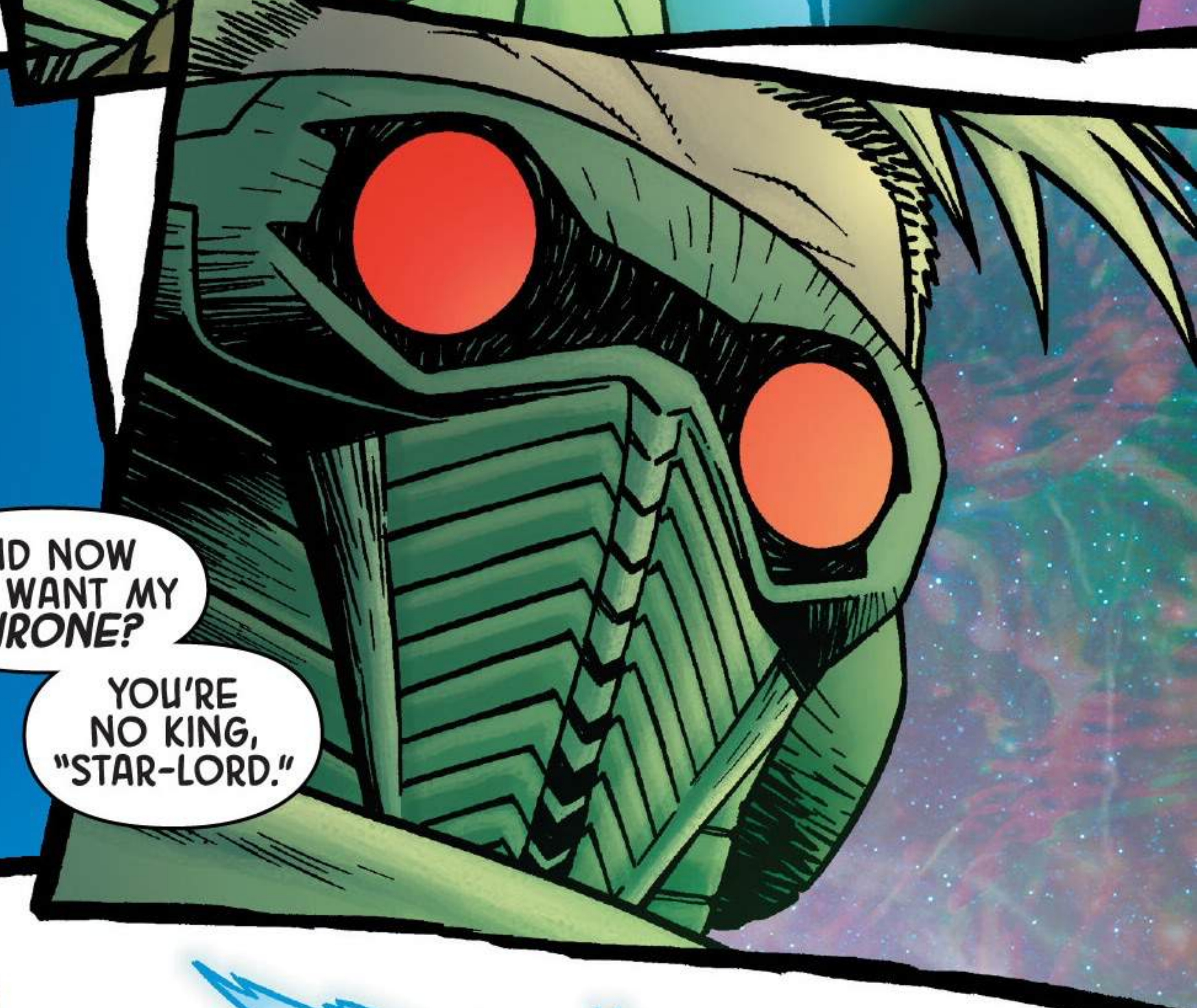
AFTER.



YES, YOU
FLED AFTER
A BEING THAT
CONSUMES WORLDS.
NOT TO CLEAN UP
YOUR MESS, BUT
TO **JOIN** HIM.

AND NOW
YOU WANT MY
THRONE?

YOU'RE
NO KING,
"STAR-LORD."



YOU'RE
JUST A
HERALD.





DRAX!

THIS
WASN'T THE
PLAN--YOU GOTTA
GET OUT OF
HERE **NOW!**

WHEN THIS
SHIP IGNITES, IT'S
GOING TO EXPLODE
INTO AN **ACTUAL SUN!**
ANYTHING CLOSE TO
IT IS GOING TO BE
SPACE ASH!

BUT IT IS NOT
YOUR TIME IN THE
SUNSHINE, BRAVE
RACCOON.

NO, NO,
NO, NO, THIS THING
IS **COMPLETELY
UNSTABLE**. YA DON'T
JUST PUSH A "GO"
BUTTON ANYMORE, THE
SPARTOI MADE
SURE OF THAT!

WITHOUT
THIS SUN, GROOT
CAN'T FLOWER.
WITHOUT FLOWERING,
OUR FRIENDS ARE
GONE FOREVER.

THE POWER
NEEDS TO BE
GUIDED.

GOOD.

I AM AN
EXCELLENT
GUIDE.

DRAX, NO!
DON'T YOU GET
IT? **THIS IS A
ONE-WAY
TRIP!**

YES.

JUST LIKE
EVERYTHING
ELSE.

OKAY, WHAT THE **FLARK**, NEBULA?! THIS PART OF THE BATTLE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE LONG OVER BY NOW!

DID YOUR CALCULATIONS NOT ACCOUNT FOR THE SPARTOI HAVING **INFINITE SPACESHIPS?!**

YEAH, OUR PROBABILITY OF SUCCESS IS DROPPING FASTER THAN QUILL'S VOICE WHEN HE'S TRYING TO SOUND LIKE A BADASS.

THIS IS WHAT HAPPENS WHEN DRAX DOESN'T FINISH THE JOB, GAMORA!

FINISHING THE JOB IS EXACTLY WHAT HE IS DOING.

MANTIS UNDERSTANDS, SHE IS THE WISEST OF US ALL.

NOW CEASE YOUR BATTLEFIELD PRATTLE.

I WOULD SPEAK UNINTERRUPTED BEFORE MY DEATH.

WHEN I WAS ARTHUR DOUGLAS, MUSIC WAS MY EVERYTHING. THE SOUNDS OF A LIFE, OF A MOMENT, OF ETERNITY...

...TURNED TO MELODY.

WHEN I FIRST BECAME DRAX, IT WAS AS A WEAPON OF WAR.

I WAS A SILENT DESTROYER. AND SO, IN MY SOULLESS MIND, I HEARD NOTHING BUT THE VOID.

BUT IN THESE LAST DAYS, IN YOUR MINDS...I HAVE HEARD IT ONCE AGAIN.

THE MUSIC.

THIS SUN NEEDS GUIDANCE.

AND SO DO I.

PERHAPS IN THE MUSIC OF ARTHUR DOUGLAS' SOUL...

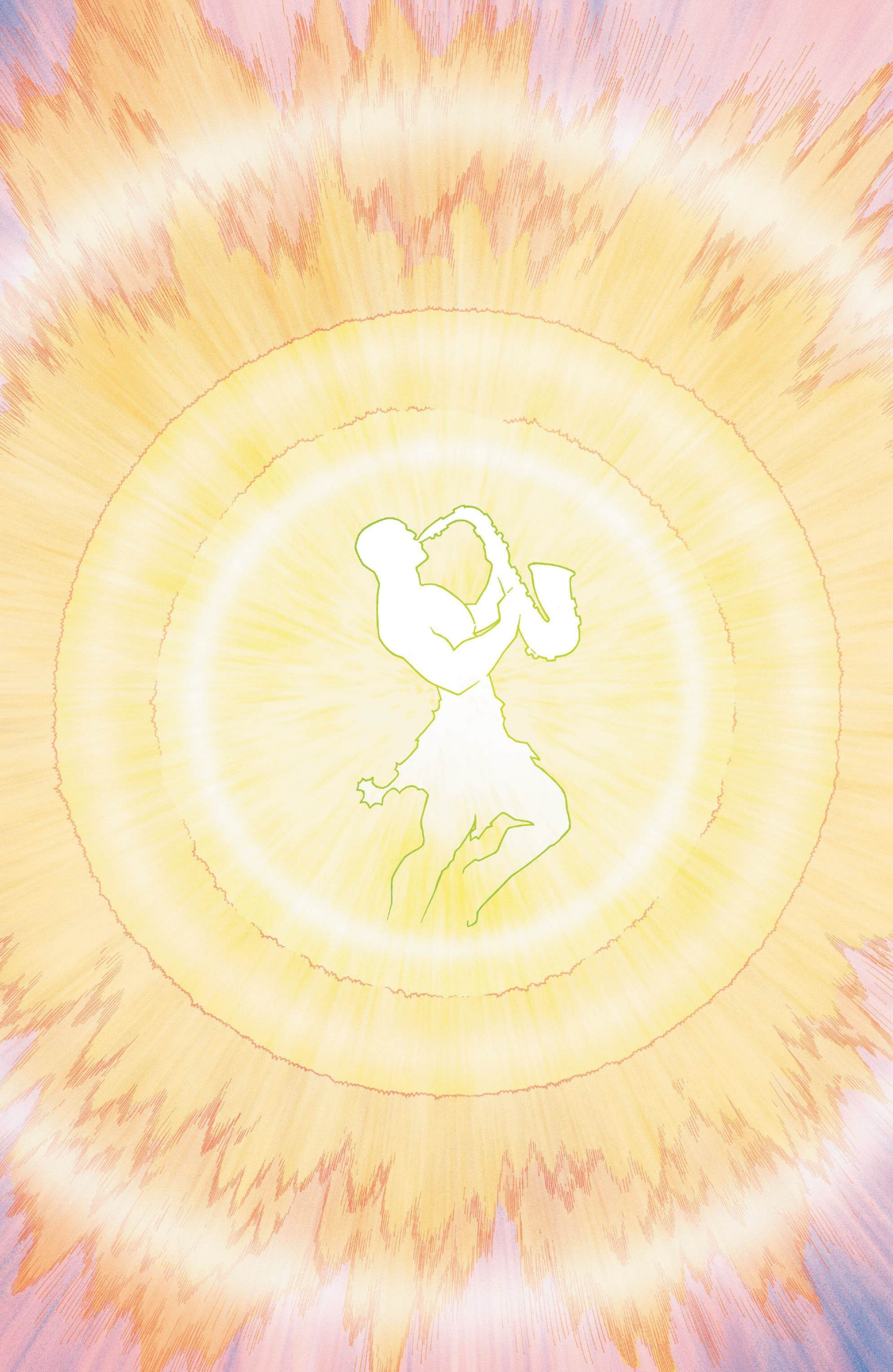
...WE CAN BOTH FIND THAT WHICH WE LACK.

I WISH I COULD HAVE SEEN MOONDRAGON. ONE LAST TIME.

"WHEN YOU DO SEE MY DAUGHTER..."

...PLEASE TELL HER...

...THIS SONG IS FOR HER.





DRAX...

THE
CREATOR.

DAMN
RIGHT.

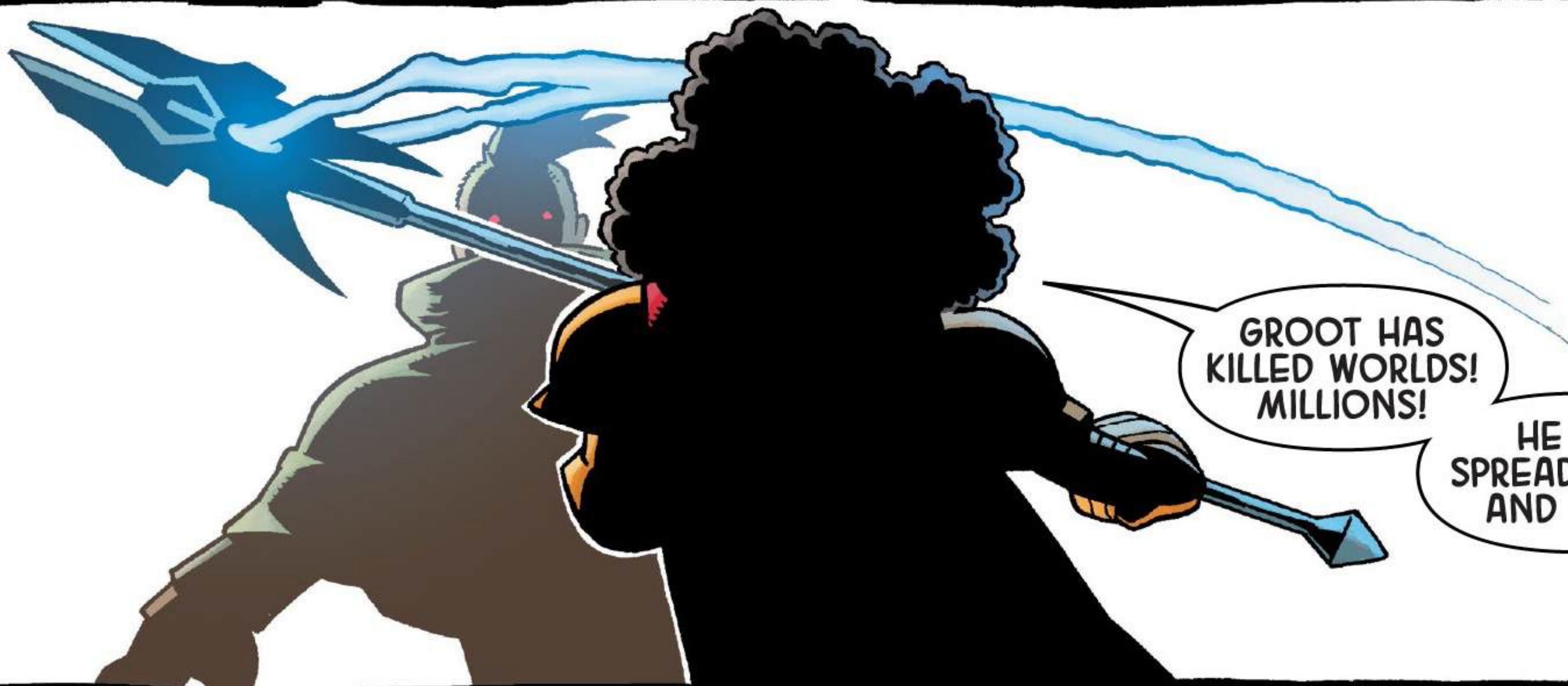
NOW LET'S
MAKE SURE IT'S
NOT IN VAIN.

SEE,
VICTORIA?

THIS ISN'T
WHAT YOU THINK.
WE DON'T HAVE
TO--

SILENCE!

ENOUGH
OF YOUR
SELF-SATISFIED
LIES!



GROOT HAS
KILLED WORLDS!
MILLIONS!

HE HAS
SPREAD CHAOS
AND RUIN!



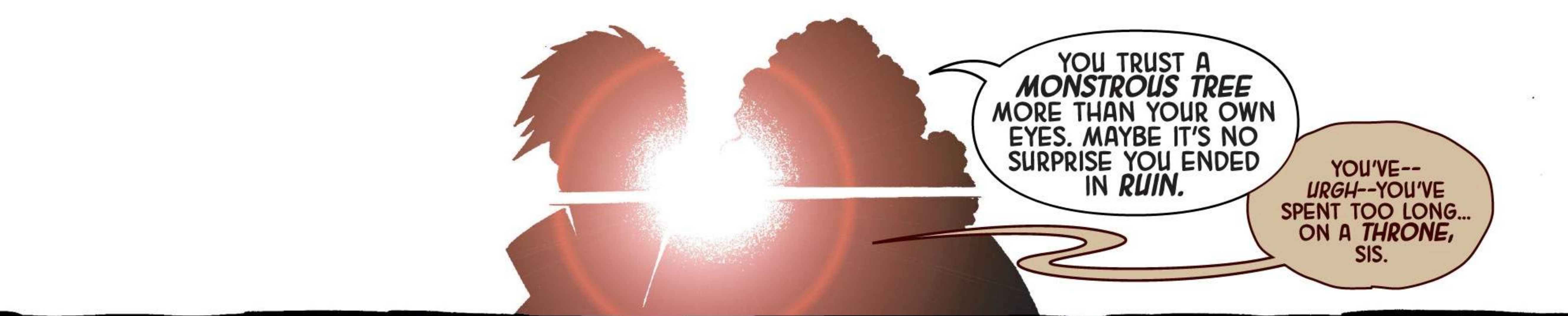
I'M NOT
FIGHTING YOU,
VIC. IT'S OVER.

THEN YOU
SACRIFICE YOUR
FAMILY AND YOUR
FRIENDS AND *EVEN*
YOURSELVES!

FOR
WHAT?!

SHUINK





YOU TRUST A **MONSTROUS TREE** MORE THAN YOUR OWN EYES. MAYBE IT'S NO SURPRISE YOU ENDED IN **RUIN**.

YOU'VE---
URGH--YOU'VE SPENT TOO LONG... ON A **THRONE**, SIS.



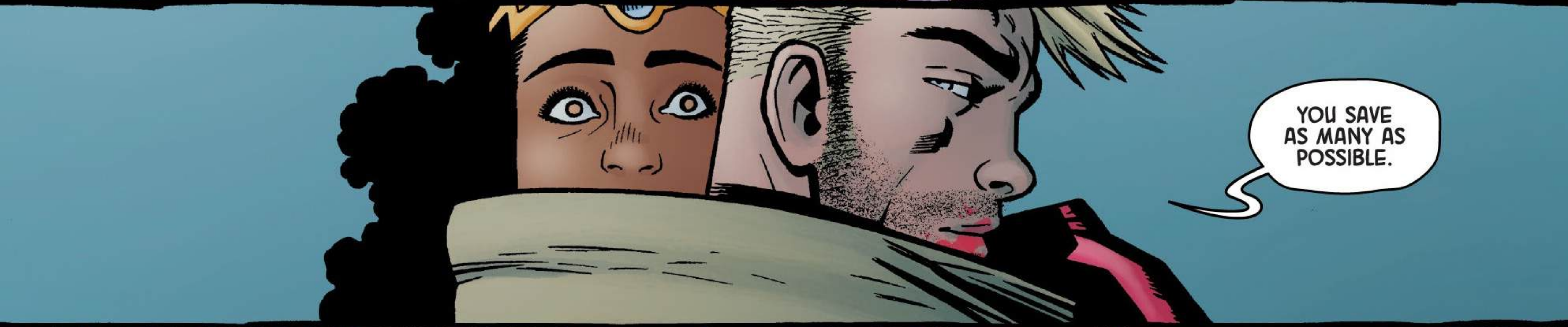
"I'M SORRY THAT YOU DON'T GET IT. THAT'S A LONELY LIFE."



OUT HERE... LIFE GETS REAL SIMPLE.



"YOU SLEEP WHEN YOU CAN."



YOU SAVE AS MANY AS POSSIBLE.



"YOU KEEP FIGHTING, NO MATTER THE COST."



AND MORE THAN ANYTHING...

"...YOU TRUST
YOUR FRIENDS."





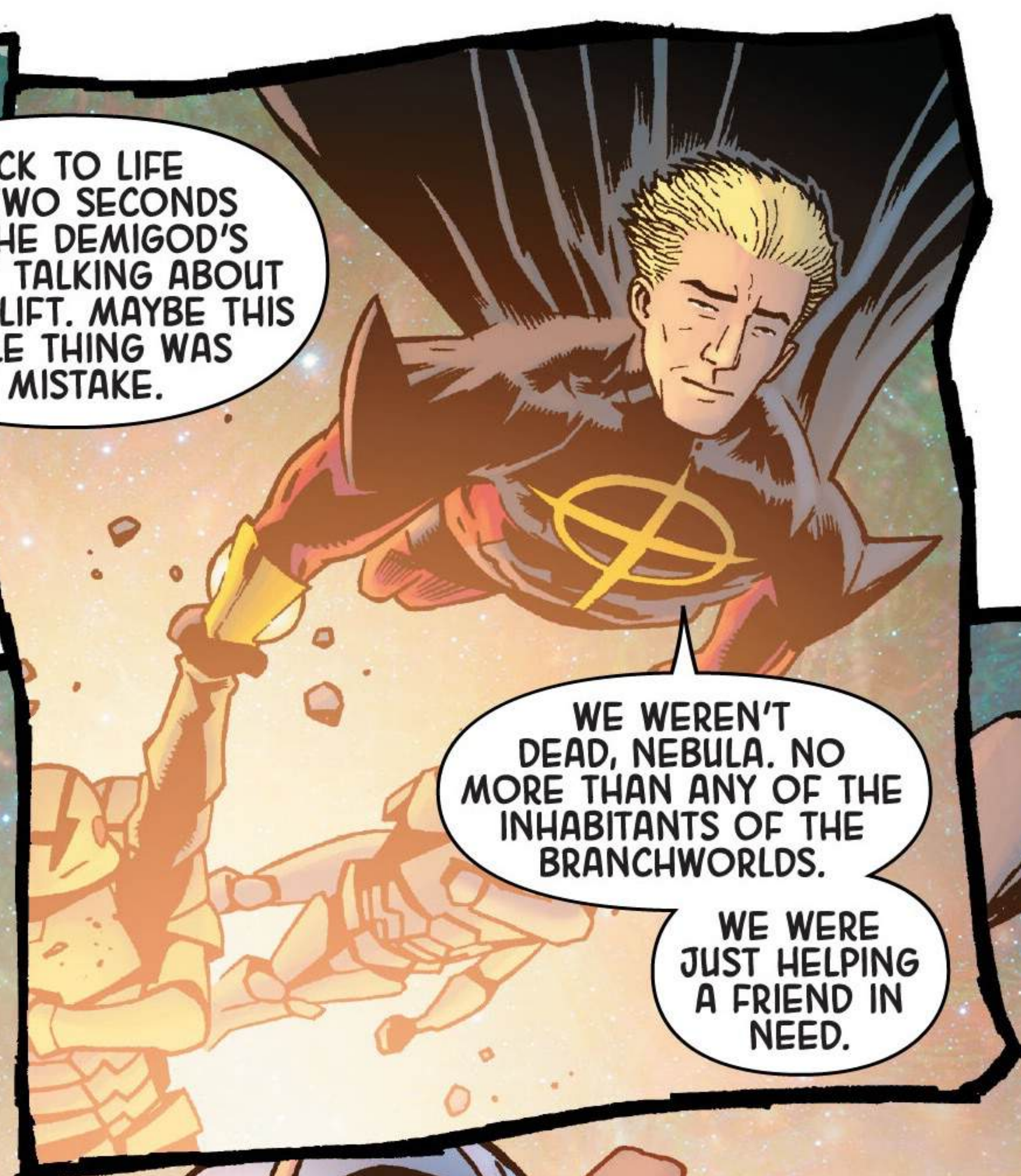
PHYLA-VELL
TO GUARDIANS--
I'VE SLOWED THE
ORBITAL DECAY IN
QUADRANT ONE.
GO FOR TRIAGE,
HERCULES.



A JOY. IT'S
BEEN FAR TOO
LONG SINCE THESE
DELTOIDS HAD A
PROPER TEST.



BACK TO LIFE
FOR TWO SECONDS
AND THE DEMIGOD'S
ALREADY TALKING ABOUT
HIS DEADLIFT. MAYBE THIS
WHOLE THING WAS
A MISTAKE.



WE WEREN'T
DEAD, NEBULA. NO
MORE THAN ANY OF THE
INHABITANTS OF THE
BRANCHWORLDS.

WE WERE
JUST HELPING
A FRIEND IN
NEED.



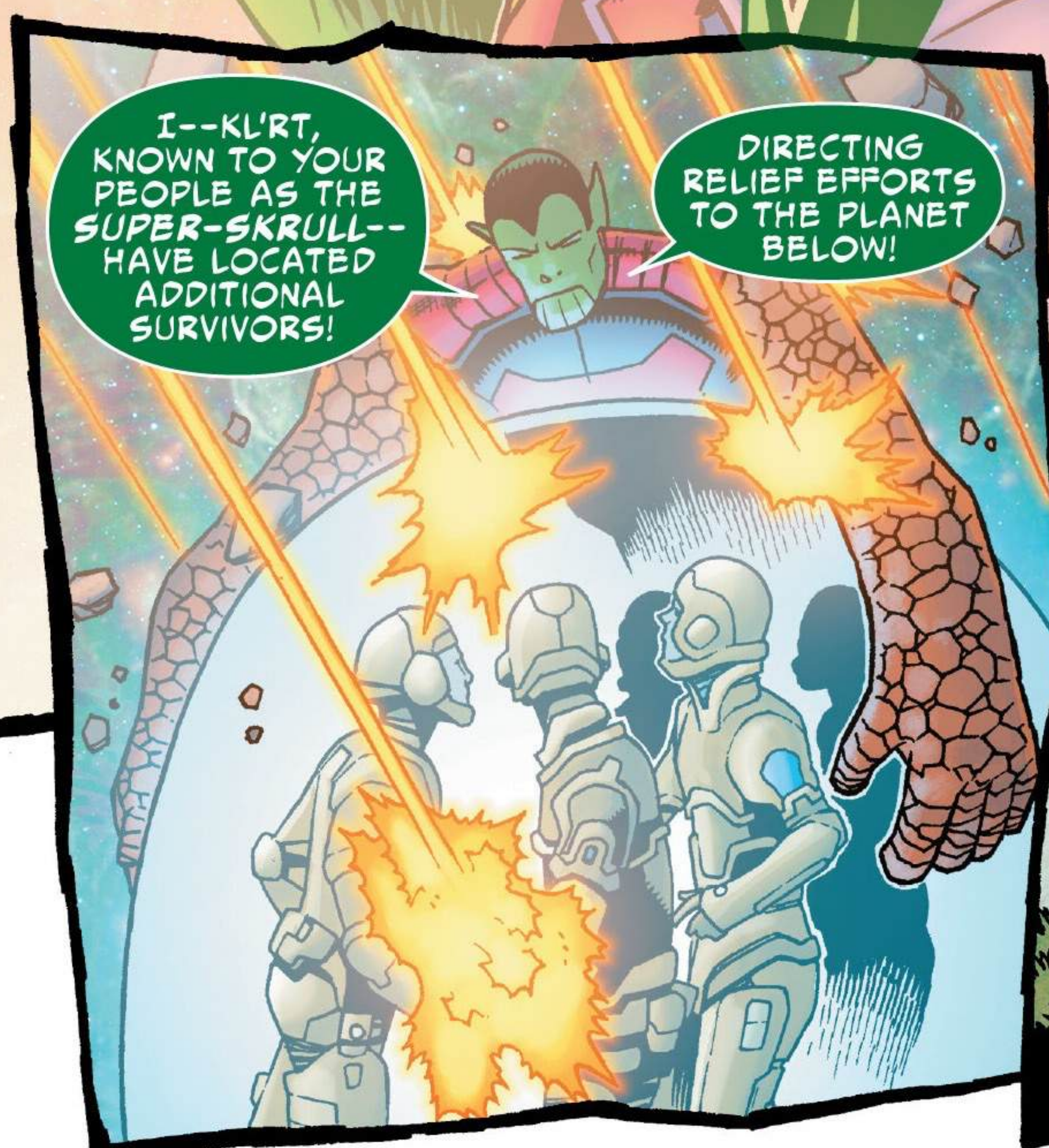
ARE YOU ALL
SEEING THIS? THERE
ARE THOUSANDS...NO,
MILLIONS OF LIFE-FORMS
ON SCANNERS!

IT WORKED!
BY ALL THE
COLORS OF THE
MULTIVERSE,
DRAX DID IT!



OF COURSE HE DID.

WE NEVER HAD A DOUBT.

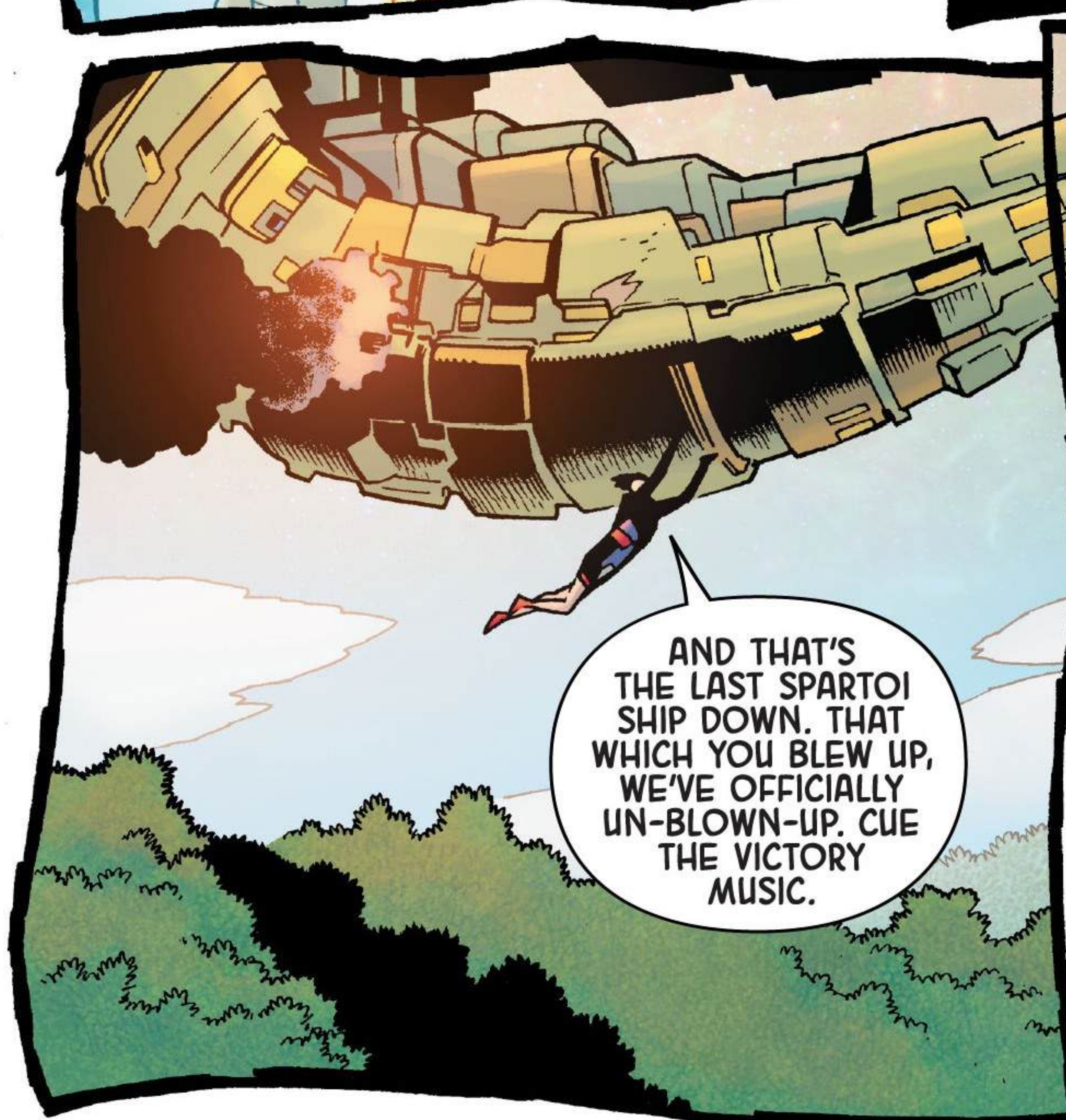


I--KL'RT, KNOWN TO YOUR PEOPLE AS THE SUPER-SKRULL-- HAVE LOCATED ADDITIONAL SURVIVORS!

DIRECTING RELIEF EFFORTS TO THE PLANET BELOW!



AND MEDICAL IS READY TO RECEIVE 'EM. LET'S GET THESE FLARKOS PATCHED UP.



AND THAT'S THE LAST SPARTOI SHIP DOWN. THAT WHICH YOU BLEW UP, WE'VE OFFICIALLY UN-BLOWN-UP. CUE THE VICTORY MUSIC.



YOU KNOW, NOH-VARR, I'M PRETTY SURE DRAX ALREADY DID.



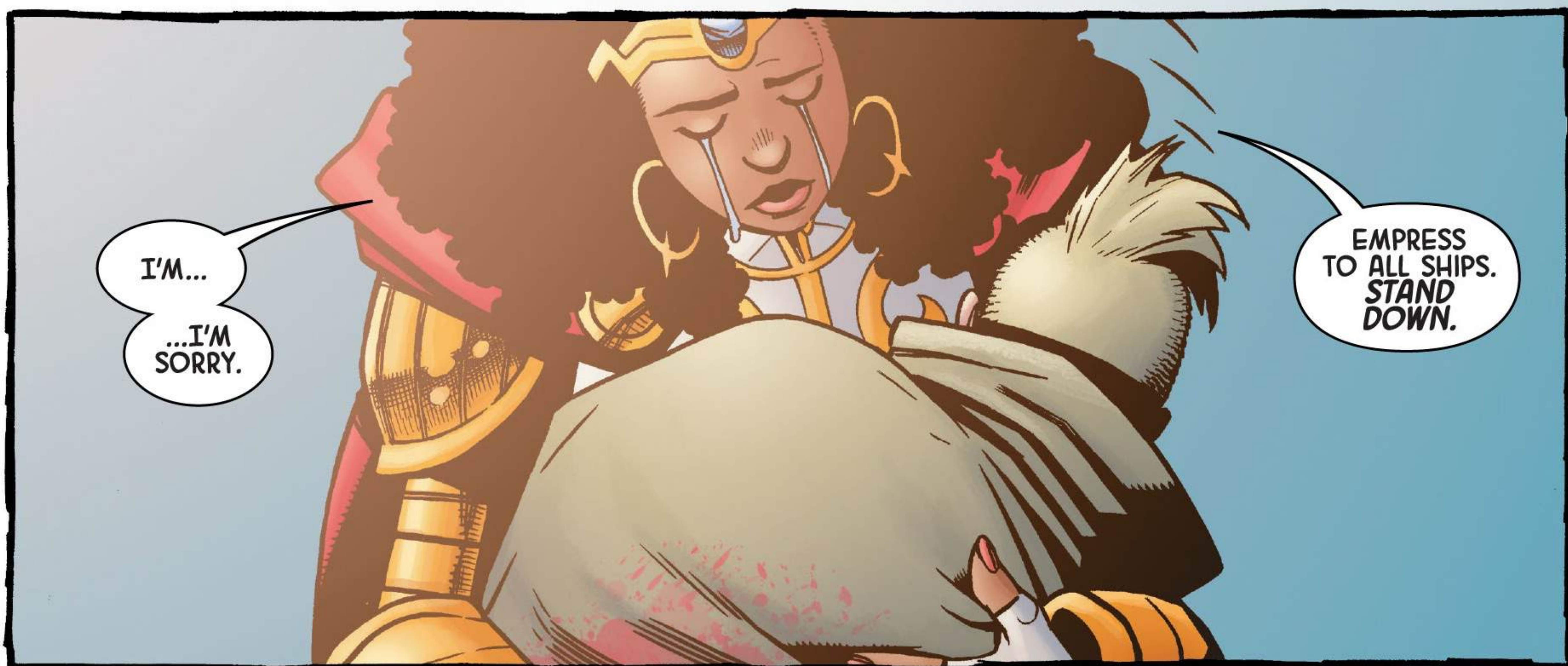
HE
NEEDED OUR
HELP.

BUT
HE DIDN'T
KNOW HOW
TO ASK.



SO IT
WAS US,
RIGHT?





I'M...

...I'M
SORRY.

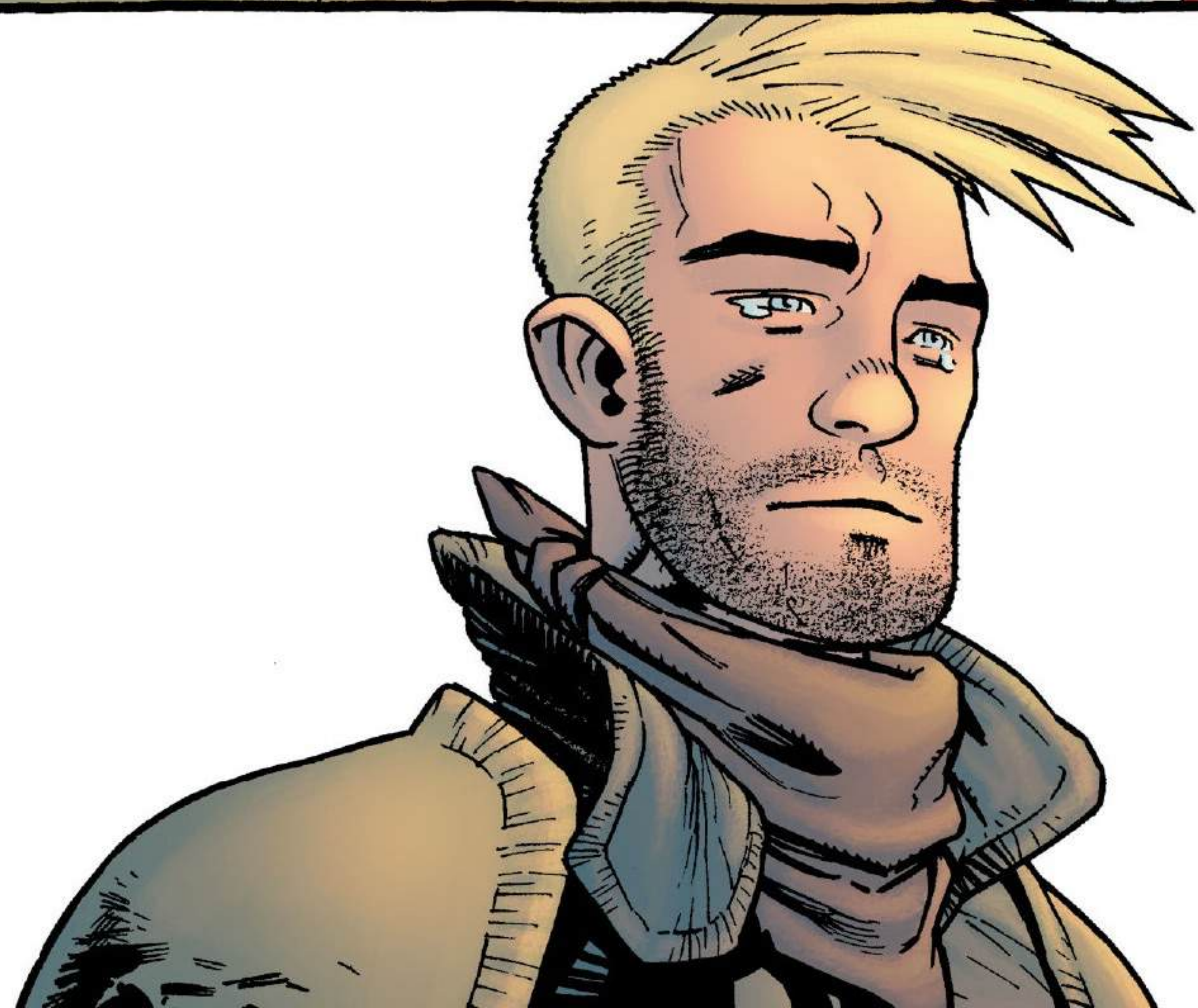
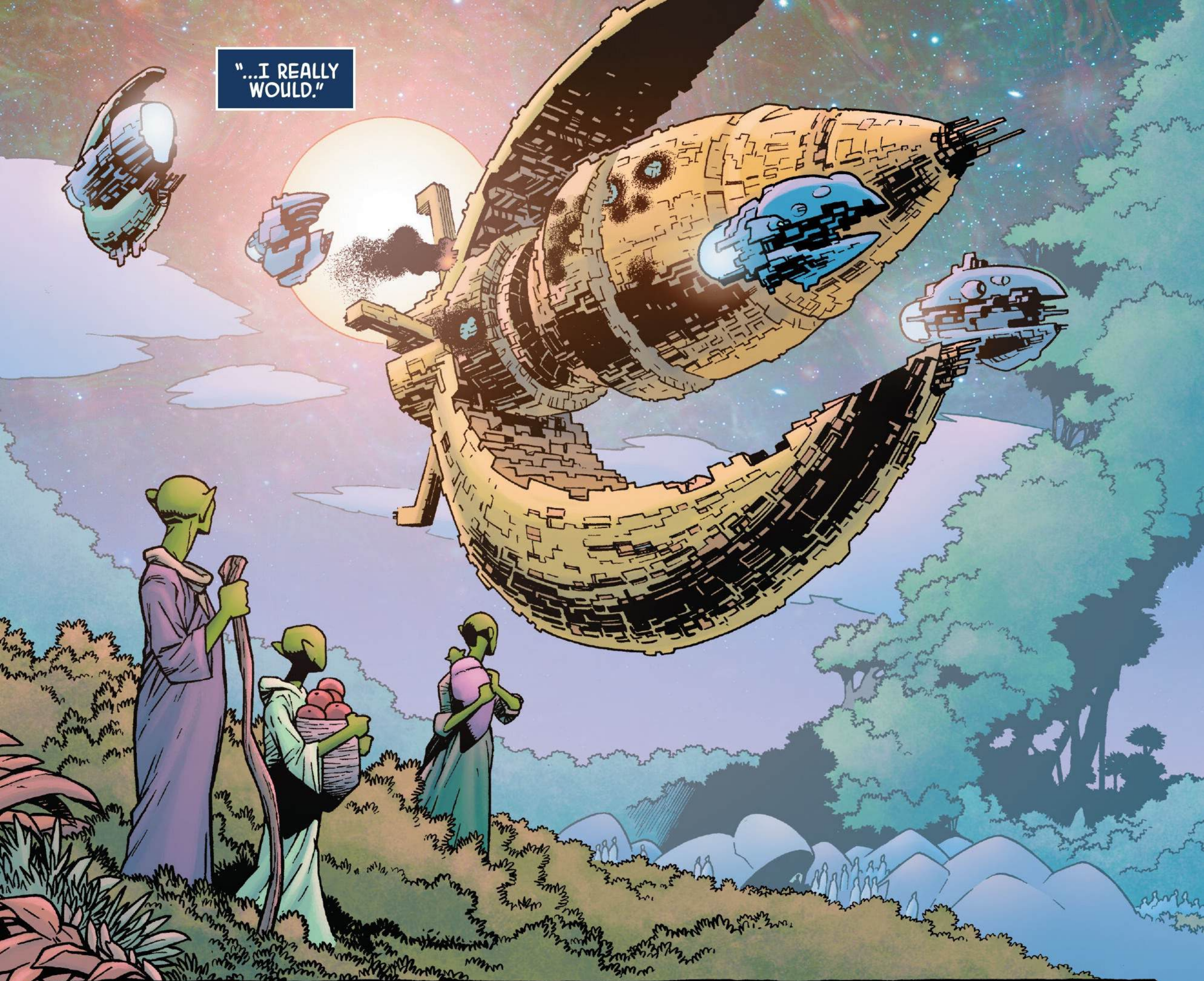
EMPRESS
TO ALL SHIPS.
**STAND
DOWN.**



PETER...WOULD
YOU...WOULD YOU
LIKE TO WELCOME
THEM BACK?

YOU KNOW...
IF YOUR MEDICS
CAN HELP ME STOP
COUGHING UP
BLOOD...

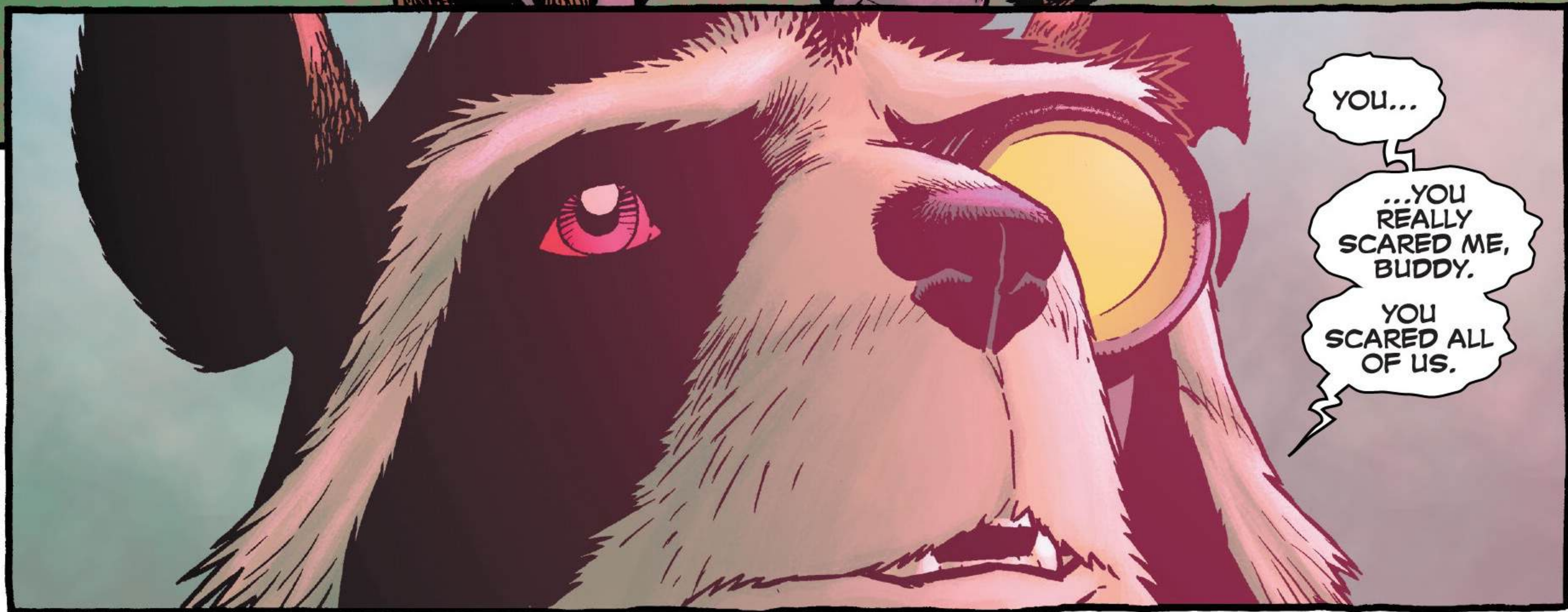
"...I REALLY WOULD."







THAT
WASN'T
COOL.



YOU...

...YOU
REALLY
SCARED ME,
BUDDY.

YOU
SCARED ALL
OF US.



I KNOW YOU WEREN'T **YOU**, BUT ALSO YOU REALLY **WERE**.

EVERY TIME I FIRED THAT GUN ON REFUGE...EVERY TIME I WATCHED ONE OF THOSE GROOTFALLS DIE...I SAW YOU IN THEIR EYES.

YOU SHOULDN'T DO THAT TO YOUR FRIENDS.

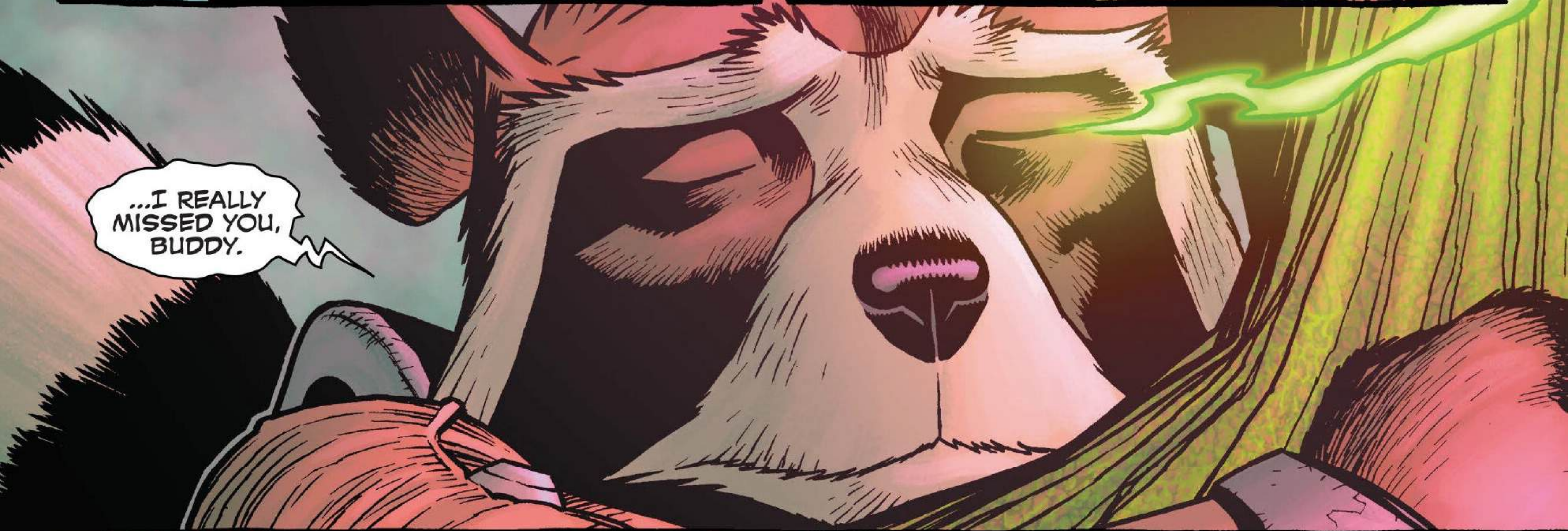


HEY NOW, DON'T YOU JUST--

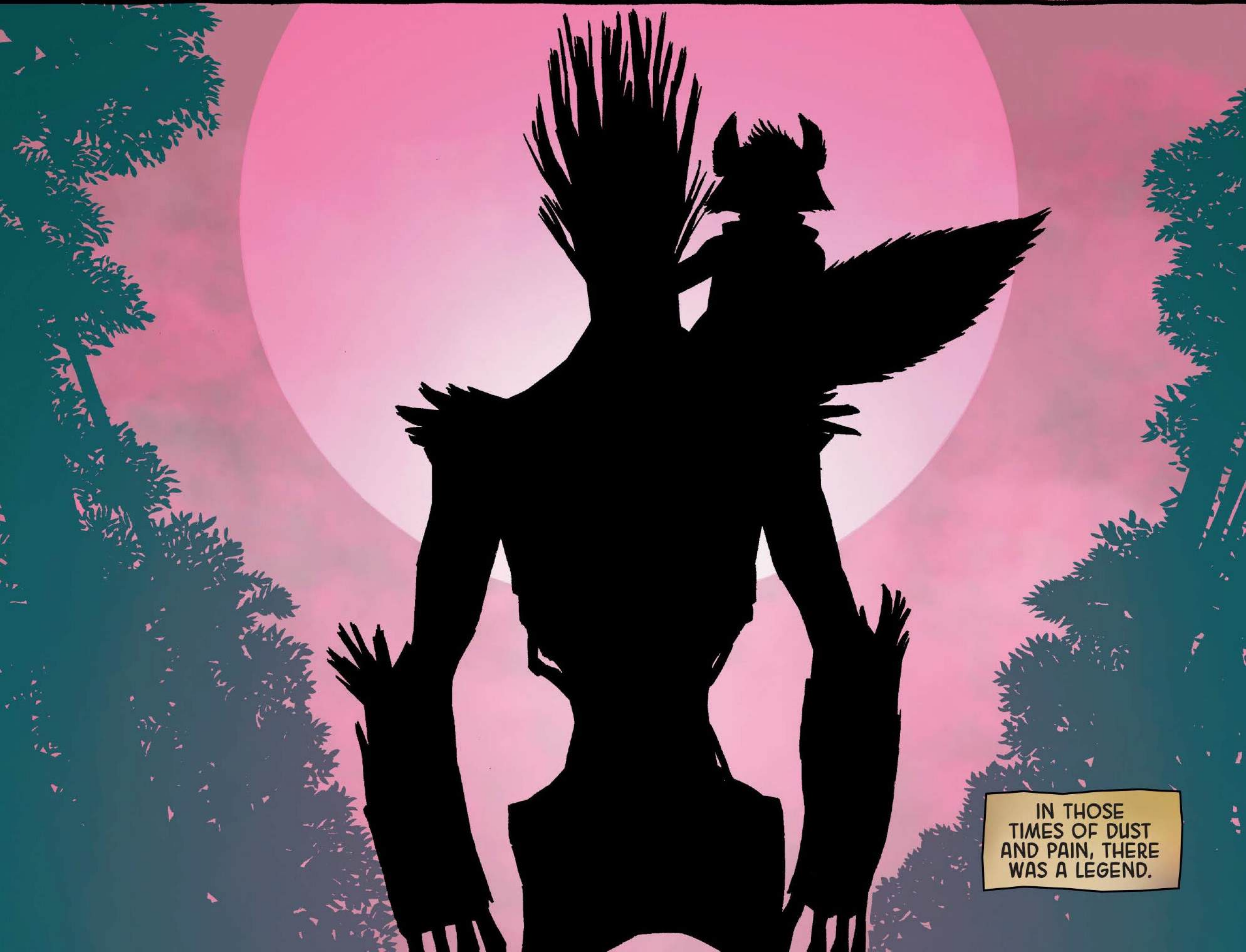
VOOOSH

THIS ISN'T SOMETHING YOU CAN JUST HEAL AWAY. YOU GOTTA KNOW THAT THIS WAS **YOUR** FAULT. THIS **SUCKED** FOR US.

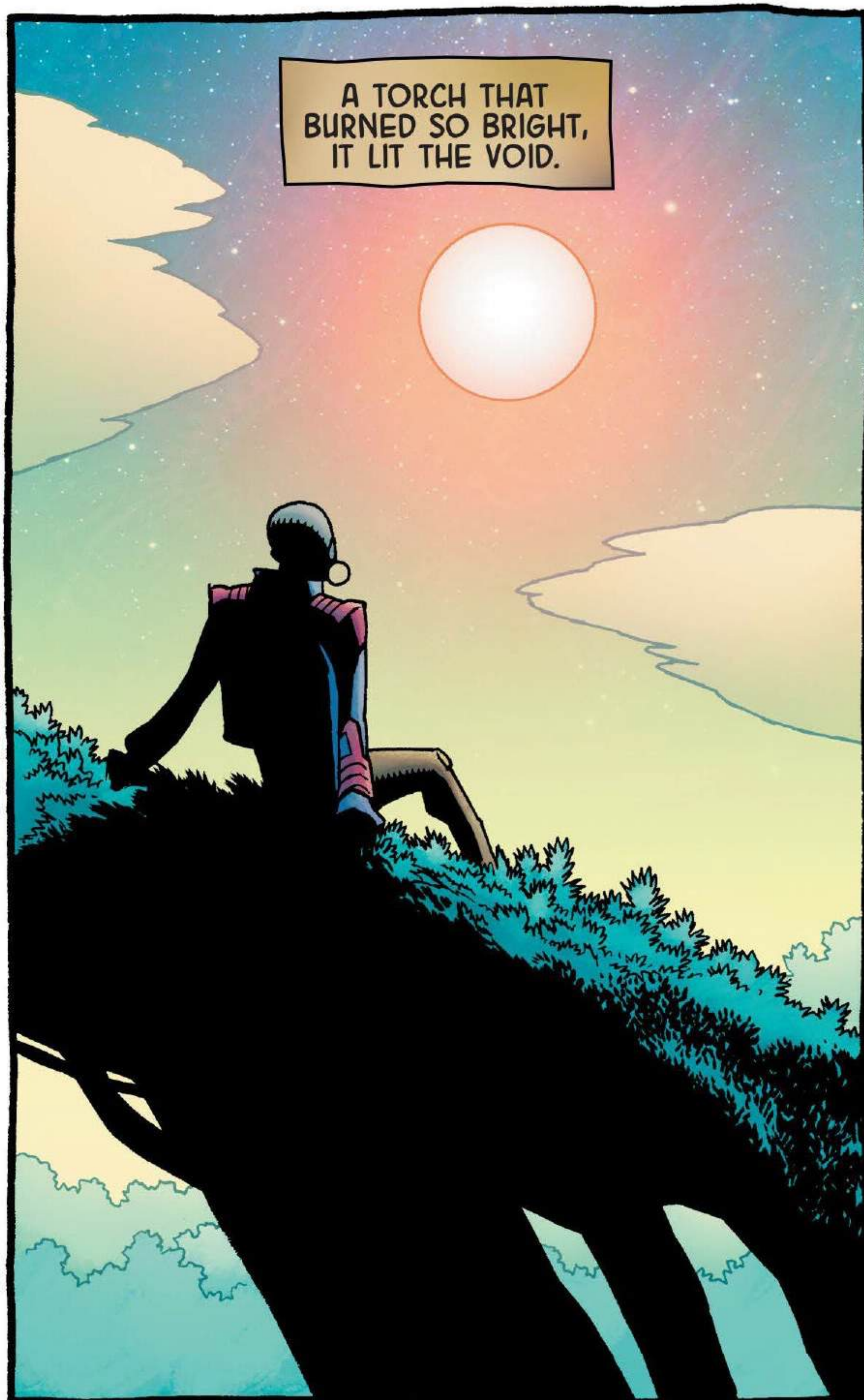
AND I...



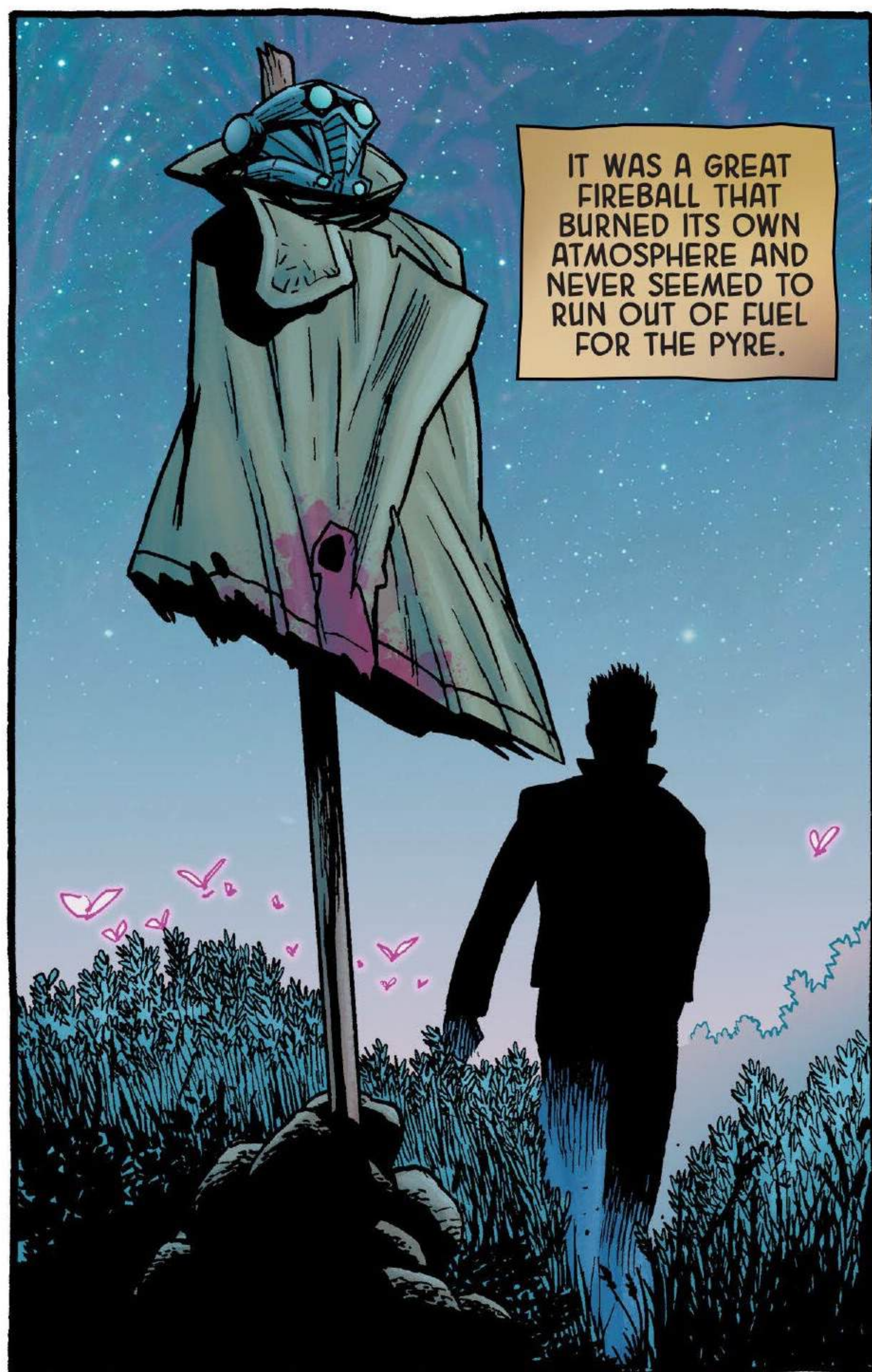
...I REALLY MISSED YOU, BUDDY.



IN THOSE TIMES OF DUST AND PAIN, THERE WAS A LEGEND.



A TORCH THAT
BURNED SO BRIGHT,
IT LIT THE VOID.



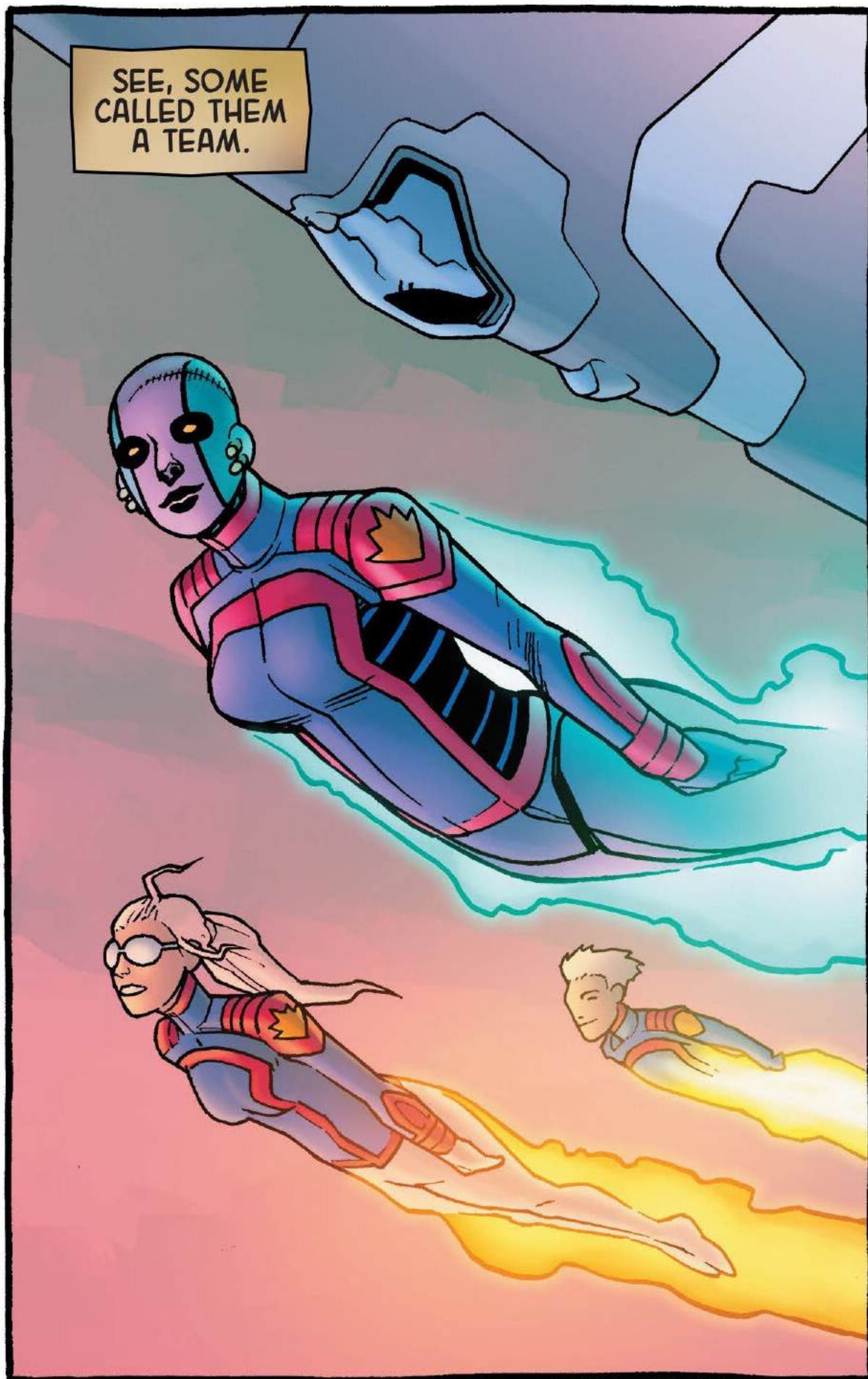
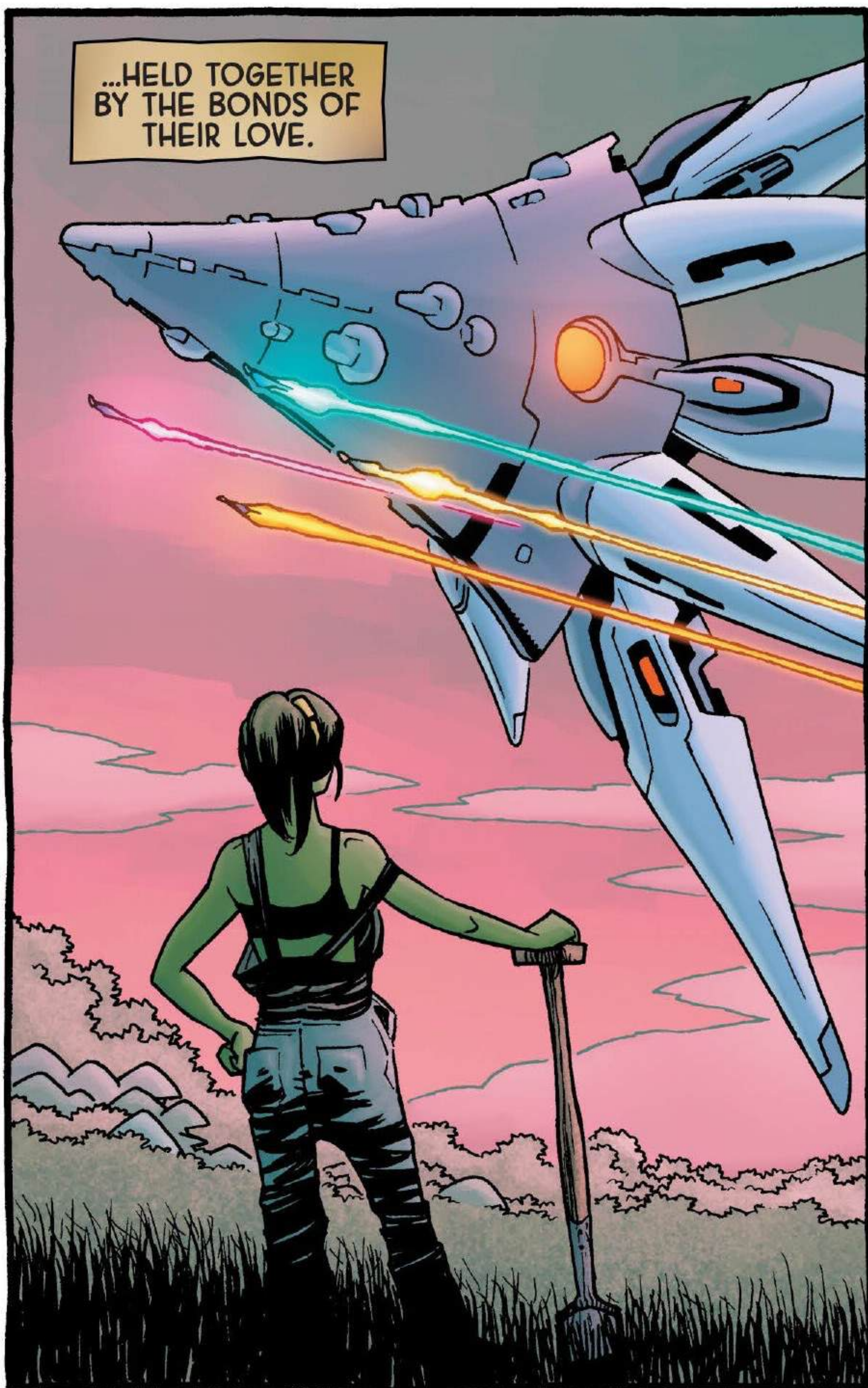
IT WAS A GREAT
FIREBALL THAT
BURNED ITS OWN
ATMOSPHERE AND
NEVER SEEMED TO
RUN OUT OF FUEL
FOR THE PYRE.



AND THERE WERE
OTHERS, THESE ASTEROID
BONFIRES. ADDING THEIR
LIGHT TO THE POWER OF
THE FIRST OF THEM.



BEACONS
OF HELLFIRE,
ROARING IN
PAIN...





...AND A
STORY ONLY
ENDS ONE
WAY.



AFTERWORD

Someday, the sun will explode.

Nature assures it. There'll be nothing left of the Earth, let alone all our works. From our loves to our histories to this very book you hold in your hands. All those markers that we were ever here at all...will be gone. And it will be entirely natural, as it has always been.

So, then...why does anything matter? Why remain righteous when the world isn't? What tragedy lies beyond each happy ending? And what worthwhile story could possibly come next?

It is with those questions in our mind that we set upon the dusty, strange spaceways of **GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY**. The spectacular arc that preceded ours, created by the unbeatable Al Ewing and a cohort of brilliant artists, had ended in the happiest of endings. The Guardians transformed into the Avengers of space. Shiny happy people holding hands. But despite the ending...the characters still lived. Time still ticked. So, as much as we loved them...

...it was up to us to explode the sun.

What followed was a year of comics that helped us through one of the most turbulent years in our lives. A story that let us explore the difficult emotional terrain of living through nature's brutal whims and rediscovering your capacity for goodness, heroism and love. These characters come alive in moments of true human adversity--depression, anxiety, guilt, shame--and channeling our own demons illuminated something not just in the characters, but in ourselves. We'll forever be grateful.

It was through Kev Walker's truly unique pen that this story took on real life. Kev's imagination knows no bounds, but he is also a storyteller of the highest caliber who constantly pushed us to streamline and consider each panel anew. We'll miss getting his notes on our scripts--that wonderful experience of the master pulling up to the table with these two young guns. And we'll miss even more watching Kev rise to every insane challenge we set in his way. I can't imagine he'll ever want to draw a tree again.

If you joined us on this road, thank you. We didn't make it easy on you. To every fan who's stopped by at a convention to discuss Rocket's heartbreak in issue #4 or Mantis' extremely weird behavior: You made this entire journey so much brighter. To Darren Shan and Noah Sharma, thank you for your trust and honesty. To say this process has been cathartic would be a vast understatement. Spending this time with the messy, damaged and truly heroic characters of the Guardians of the Galaxy has given us such a gift.

We shed tears along the way. And though it might make us monsters, we hope you did too.

Now, having brought the family back together, that happy ending is once again back on the table. Like every writer before us, we've bought into the lie. For now...until the next time the Guardians find themselves unearthed...we've brought them to a pause of well-earned peace.

Here's to the next fire.



Jackson Lanzing & Collin Kelly
"The Hivemind"
Los Angeles, 2024



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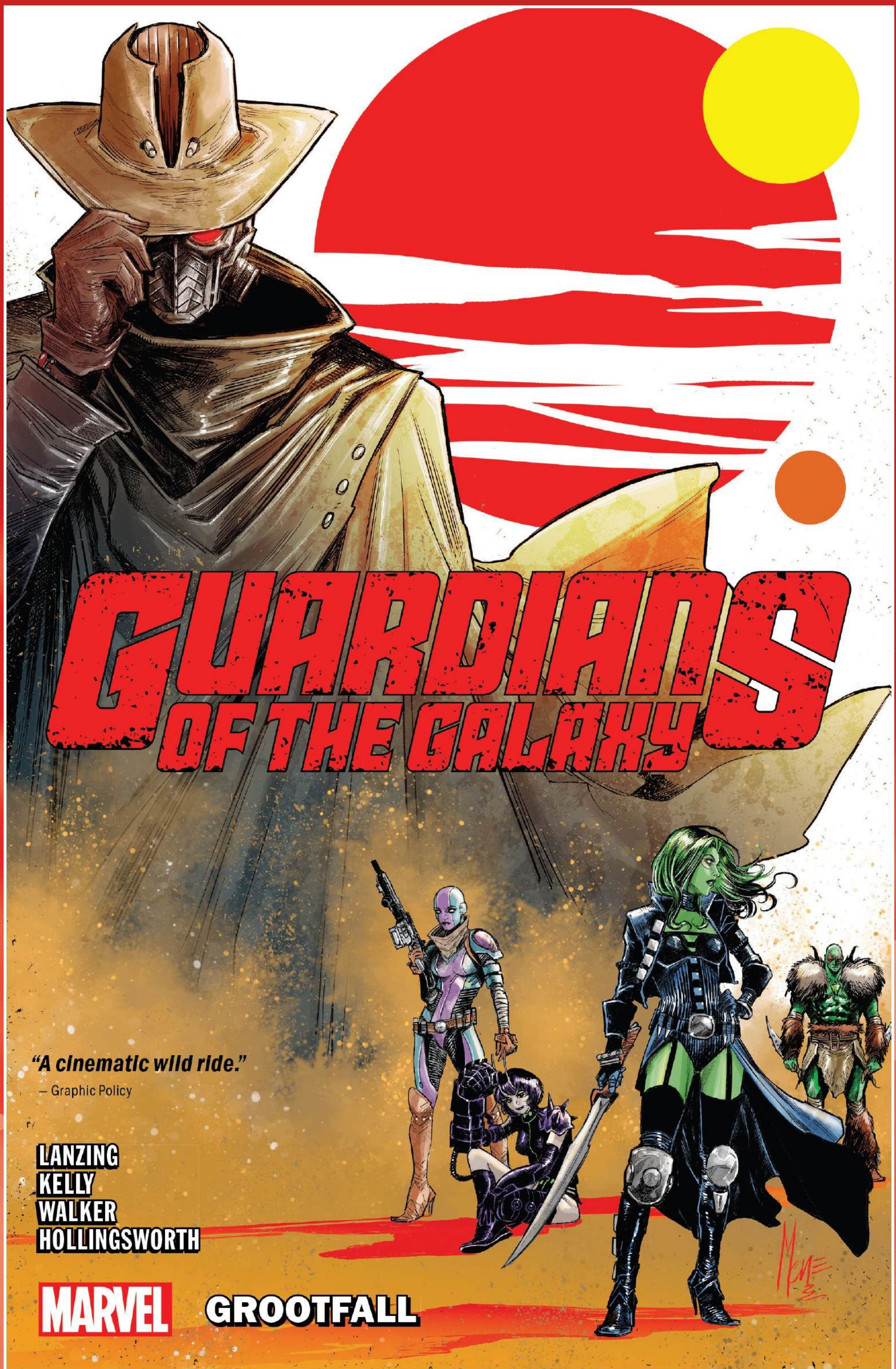
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COLLECTING **GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY (2023) #6-10**
AND **GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY ANNUAL (2024) #1** –
BY COLLIN KELLY, JACKSON LANZING, ALEX LINS, KEV WALKER,
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